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THE

WORKS

OF THE

REV. JOHN NEWTON,

LATE

RECTOR OF THE UNITED PARISHES

OF

ST. MARY WOOLNOTH AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH HAW,

London.

FROM THE LAST LONDON EDITION,
PUBLISHED BY DIRECTION OF HIS EXECUTORS.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

NEW-HAVEN:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY NATHAN WHITING.

1824.

BX 5037
N4
v. 4

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Letters to a Wife.

WRITTEN DURING

THREE VOYAGES TO AFRICA,

FROM 1750 TO 1754.

———O laborum
Dulce lenimen———!
HOR.

They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.—PSALM cvii. 23. 24.

PREFACE.

When, after repeated checks of conscience, I obstinately broke through all restraints of religion, it pleased God for a time to give me up to my own wilfulness and folly; perhaps as much so, as ever poor creature was given up to himself, who did not finally perish. The way of transgressors is always hard. It proved so to me. The miseries into which I plunged myself, could only be exceeded by the dreadful wickedness of my heart and life. At length I was driven to the desperate determination of living upon the coast of Africa. My principal residence was at the Plantanes, an island at the mouth of the river of Sherbro, on the windward coast, about twenty leagues S. E. from Sierra Leone. Some account of this mournful part of my early life has been long in print.

The coast of Guinea is a country from whose bourn few travellers, who have once ventured to settle there, ever return. But God, against whom I had sinned with a high hand, was pleased to appoint me to be a singular instance of his mercy. He not only spared me, but watched over me, by his merciful providence, when I seemed to be bent upon my own destruction; and provided for my deliverance from my wretched thraldom. To him who has all hearts in his hands I ascribe it, that a friend of my father's, the late Mr. Joseph Manesty, a merchant of Liverpool, to whom I was then an utter stranger, directed the captain of one of his ships to inquire for me, and, if he could, to bring me home. This proposal for my deliverance, no less unexpected than undeserved by me, reached me at a time when some circumstances of my captivity were, according to my wretched views and taste, a little amended, and I at first hesitated to accept it. And, I believe, had it not been for one consideration, which will be often mentioned in the course of these letters, I should have lived and died in my bondage. When I returned to Liverpool, I found, in Mr. Manesty, a second father; he treated me with great kindness, and took upon himself the care of providing for me.

Towards the close of the year 1749, Mr. Manesty promised me the command of a ship to Africa, in the ensuing season. On this promise (for I had no other dependence) I ventured to marry on the first of February following, where my heart had been long engaged. After I had gained my point, I often trembled for my precipitation. For though I

am sure I should have preferred the person I married to any other woman in the world, though possessed of the mines of Potosi; (she had no fortune;) and if any thing had happened to involve her in difficulties upon my account, I think my strong affection for her would have made me truly miserable.

I have often thought since, that we were then like two unexperienced people on the edge of a wide wilderness, without a guide, ignorant of the way they should take, entirely unapprised of the difficulties they might have to encounter. But the Lord God, whom at that time we knew not, had mercifully purposed to be our guide and our guard.

The imminent danger and extreme distress to which we were reduced by a storm, in my passage from Africa to Liverpool, had, by the mercy of God, made such an impression upon my mind, that I was no longer an infidel or a libertine. I had some serious thoughts, was considerably reformed, but too well satisfied with my reformation. If I had any spiritual light, it was but as the first faint streaks of the early dawn: and I believe it was not yet day-break with my dear wife. She was young, cheerful, and much esteemed by her connexions, which were genteel and numerous. She was not wanting in that decent religion which is compatible with the supposed innocent gayeties of a worldly life; and which disposes people to be equally ready and punctual (in their respective seasons) at church and at cards, at the assembly or theatre, and at the sacrament. Further than this she knew not, nor was I qualified to teach her. It is rather probable that, if I could have remained at home, my great attachment to her would have drawn me into the same paths, and that we should have looked no higher for happiness than to our mutual satisfaction in each other.

But God had designed better things for us. The season for sailing approached, and I was constrained to leave her, to take the command and charge of my ship. This necessity of being absent from her, which then seemed to me bitter as death, I have now reason to acknowledge as one of the chief mercies of my life. *Nisi periissem, periissem.* If I could have obtained my fond short-sighted wish, and have continued with her, I see that, humanly speaking, it might have proved the ruin of us both.

The summons I received to repair to Liverpool, awakened me as out of a dream. When I was forced from her, I found both leisure and occasion for much reflection. My serious thoughts, which had been almost smothered, began to revive. And my anxiety with respect to what might possibly happen while I was abroad, induced me to offer up many prayers for her, before I well knew how to pray for myself. He who

takes notice of the cries of the young ravens in their nests, was pleased to hear mine. In a word, I soon felt the need of that support which only religion can give. The separation likewise tended, on both sides, to give a certain tenderness and delicacy, and thereby a permanency, to our affection, which might not have flourished to equal advantage, through life, if we had always lived together.

This brief introduction may possibly throw some light upon several passages which will occur in the course of my correspondence.

The only expedient we could then think of to alleviate the pains of absence, was writing. Letters were accordingly exchanged, by every post, while I staid in England: and when I sailed, and could not expect to hear from her for a long time, I still continued to write on the usual post-days. And this practice afforded me so much relief and pleasure, that it was not long before I wrote (if business and circumstances would permit) almost every day of every week. Few, if any, of my letters miscarried. The first volume* of this publication is formed by a selection of extracts from those which I sent home during the three voyages I made to Africa. Those in the second, are extracted from a number almost equal, which I wrote when we were occasionally separated, after the good providence of God freed me from that iniquitous employment in which I was too long ignorantly engaged, and appointed me a settlement on shore.

When I first undertook this painful, pleasing task, I had not the least thought of the letters appearing in print so soon. I intended them for a posthumous legacy to my friends and to the public. But in the progress of the work, my objections to publishing them myself, were gradually weakened; and I became more willing to erect, as it were, a monument to the memory of a valuable and much valued woman in my own life-time. The only justifiable plea I can allege for printing these letters at all, is a hope that, by the blessing of God, they may be made useful to some of my readers; and if this hope be not ill-founded, the sooner they appear the better. Some testimony in favour of the happiness of wedded life, some intimation of the snares and abatements which attend it, seems not unseasonable in the present day. And perhaps I am, by experience, qualified to be as unexceptionable a witness, in both respects, as most men.

I am aware that I shall expose myself to the charge of egotism; but this I may cheerfully submit to, if my heart does not deceive me with respect to my motives and proposed end. Neither the censures nor the praises of men, ought to have an undue influence upon those who profess

* These letters were originally published in two volumes.

to act with a view to the glory of God, and the benefit of their fellow-creatures. And as to myself, now far advanced in life, and standing upon the brink of the grave and of eternity, it does not become me to be very solicitous what mortals may say or think of me, either at present, or when I shall cease to be seen among them, provided I am justly chargeable with nothing unsuitable to my profession and general character. We must all shortly appear before the tribunal of the great, unerring Judge, the one Lawgiver, who is able to save or to destroy. *Dies iste indicabit.* Then the secrets of all hearts will be unfolded, and every character will appear in its true light.

Yet as my letters are of a singular cast, and I tread upon rather new and unbeaten ground, the respect which I owe to my readers requires me to request their candid perusal, and to soften, if I can, such objections as I foresee may arise in their minds (as they may be differently disposed) to different parts of the book.

It is proper to make an apology to the public at large, for the detail of many incidents which, however interesting to myself, especially at the time of writing, are certainly not sufficiently so to deserve general attention. If I had not suppressed the greater part of these, my two small volumes would have swelled to folios. To have suppressed them all, besides defeating my main design, would have made the little remainder appear harsh and stiff; would have given the letters an air of declamation, and have destroyed that freedom which is essential to the epistolary style. It is difficult to draw the exact line, and to fix the proper medium; and especially so to me, on a subject in which I am so nearly concerned, and on which I could not well consult my friends. I have kept this difficulty in view through the whole, and have acted to the best of my judgment. What some persons will blame, others may approve, and my books will be open to all. Besides, as the workings and emotions common to the human heart are much fewer than the various events and occasions that may excite them; some account of my own feelings, under certain circumstances, may apply to the feelings of others in their more important affairs.

To my more serious readers, I may well apologize for most of the letters of an early date; which I should certainly be ashamed of now, if they were printed by themselves. But as I began to *write* about the same time that I began to *see;* and, in proportion as light increased upon my mind, my letters assumed a graver cast; I was willing to insert such a series as might mark the progress of that spiritual knowledge which the Lord taught me to seek, and which I did not seek entirely in vain. My

letters, which at first were trifling, soon became more serious; and as I was led into further views of the principles and privileges of the Gospel, I endeavoured to communicate to my dear correspondent what I had received. And, in due time, he was pleased to make them a mean of affecting her heart, and impressing her with the same desires and aims. For which mercy I can never sufficiently adore and praise him.

If they who think lightly of marriage, or who chiefly engage in it upon interested motives, prefering the wealth, and pomp, and glare of the world to a union of hearts; if such persons should treat all that I have written upon the subject as folly, rant, and enthusiasm, I cannot help it. To them, I owe no apology. I only hope they will not be angry with me for expressing a friendly wish that they might be even as I was, excepting the heart-aches and inquietudes that I sometimes felt, which I considered as a price paid (and I thought the purchase not dear) for my satisfaction. Long experience and much observation have convinced me, that the marriage state, when properly formed and prudently conducted, affords the nearest approach to happiness (of a merely temporal kind) that can be attained in this uncertain world, and which will best abide the test of sober reflection.

To infidels, sceptics, and libertines, if such should be among the number of my readers, I cannot expect that any apology of mine, for what might be justly exceptionable, would be either acceptable or sufficient. They will be glad if they can pick out any sentiments, either false or trivial, to exhibit as specimens of the whole. Yet I have something to say to *them;* not in a spirit of defiance, but of meekness. These characters were once, alas! my own. Had my abilities and opportunities been equal to the depraved taste of my heart, I should have rivalled Voltaire himself. My own experience convinces me, that nothing short of a divine power can soften that mind which, after having stifled repeated checks of conscience, has renounced revelation, and is hardened like steel by infidelity. I know the gall and bitterness, the effects, and the awful danger of that state. Such persons are entitled to my compassion and my prayers; if, peradventure, it may please God to give them repentance, to the acknowledgment of the truth. It is not the smallest evil resulting from this malignant poison, that they who are infected by it, cannot be content with going on in their own way alone; but usually labour, with a zeal almost equal to that of a martyr, to draw others into the same path. There is a something within them which will, at times, remonstrate and recoil, in defiance of their utmost efforts. At such seasons, (like children in the dark,)

unless they have company, their spirits will flag. This prompts them to employ every art of sophistry and dissimulation to gain proselytes.

Historical deduction and learned arguments are not necessary to evince the truth of the Gospel. It proves its own importance by its obvious tendency, and by its uniform effects. Let a thinking man suppose, for a moment, that the motives, hopes, and rules proposed in the New Testament, were to be universally understood, cordially embraced, and strictly observed, to-morrow; the sure consequence, that a change equally universal, in the general habits, tempers, and pursuits of mankind, would likewise to-morrow take place, must force itself upon his mind. The wilderness would become a garden: fraud, violence, discord, oppression, and profligacy, would instantly cease; order, justice, peace, benevolence, and every branch of morality, would instantly flourish. Men would live as brethren, and treat each other as they could equitably expect to be treated themselves in simlar cases. Such are the *actual* effects, where the Gospel is truly received. How many who, like the man possessed with a legion, or like me, were miserable and mischievous, a burden to themselves and to their friends, and a nuisance in the community, have been, and still are, brought to their right minds, rescued from the tyranny of contending inordinate passions, and taught to fill up their places in society with decorum and usefulness! The Gospel, thus embraced, is presently found to be exactly suited to the wants, desires, and forebodings of the human heart. It adds a relish to all the comforts of life; diminishes the pressure of afflictions; affords a balm for every wound, a cordial for every care; and enables the believer to meet death with composure, dignity, and hope.

How ungenerous then, how cruel, are they who endeavour to rob us of this precious *depositum*, when they have nothing to propose as a substitute? But blessed be God, their attempts are no less vain than deperate. They may blind the eyes of a few, but they cannot deprive the sun of its light.

Such is the power of guilt and fear to alienate the mind from God, that they who would tremble to be seated in a carriage drawn by unruly horses, with no one to manage the reins, are reduced to deny a governing providence of God over all his creatures, and especially over mankind. They think it less uncomfortable to suppose, that the contingencies to which we are liable, in such a world as this, are the mere unavoidable result of second causes, than that they are under the direction of Him whose almighty power is combined with infinite wisdom and goodness. For they know and feel, that if there be a God, if he be wise and good, and if he takes

cognizance of the hearts and actions of men, they have every thing to dread. From person's of this stamp, I can expect no favour. I once thought, or wished, as they do; but the divine Providence, which I long denied and defied, convinced me of my error by multiplied merciful interpositions in my behalf. May the like mercy and compassion be extended to many others who, at present, know not what they do!

I return from this digression. My views in sending these letters abroad, are chiefly four:—

1. As a public testimony of the thanks which I owe to the God of my life, for giving me such a treasure; for uniting our hearts by such tender ties, and for continuing her to me so long.

2. As a monument of respect and gratitude to her memory. She was my pleasing companion, my most affectionate friend, my judicious counsellor. I seldom or never repented of acting according to her advice. And I seldom acted against it, without being convinced, by the event, that I was wrong.

3. I hope to show by the most familiar kind of proof, *example*, that marriage, (when the parties are united by affection, and the general conduct is governed by religion and prudence,) is not only an honourable, but a comfortable state. But, from what I have felt, and what I have seen, I am well assured that religion, by which I mean the fear of God, a regard to his precepts, and a dependence upon his care, is absolutely necessary to make us comfortable, or happy, even in the possession of our own wishes. The fairest prospects, unless founded upon this basis, may be compared to a house built upon the sand, which may seem to answer for a time, while the weather is fine; but which, when tried by the storms and floods, the changes and calamities inseparable from the present state of things, will sooner or later fall, and involve the builders in confusion and distress.

4. I likewise hope, that my example may prove a warning to others, who set out with warm hopes of satisfaction, to be cautious of an over-attachment to their creature-comforts. *Hinc illæ lacrymæ.* My sharpest trials, and my most pungent causes for repentance and humiliation, through life, sprung from this source!

LETTERS TO A WIFE.

1750.

FIRST VOYAGE TO AFRICA.

St. Alban's, May 19.

My Dearest,

I Could have reached Dunstable to-night, but I remembered that you had desired me not to ride late.

I think I fully obeyed you in not saying much when I took my leave. My heart was really too full; and had I been more able, the fear of increasing your uneasiness would have prevented me. Were I capable of describing all the tender sentiments that have occurred since we parted, an indifferent person would allow me to be master of the *pathetic*. But I cannot express what I feel. Do me the justice to believe my affection goes beyond any words I can use.

I purpose to set off early to-morrow, and to attend service at church somewhere on the road; which I do not care to miss without necessity. But now I am particularly desirous of improving the first opportunity to implore, in a solemn manner, the protection of Divine Providence, that we may be favoured with a happy meeting.

Gracious God! favour me and my dearest M**** with health, and a moderate share of the good things of this life! Grant that I may be always happy in her love, and always prove deserving of it! For the rest, the empty gewgaws and gilded trifles, which engage the thoughts of multitudes, I hope I shall be always able to look upon them with indifference.

I make no apology for this serious strain. Believe me, I write experimentally; and to the degree that I love you, I could not bear to be torn from you in this manner, if I was not supported by my principles; which teach me that I ought to be not only content, but thankful that things are so well with me as they are, and to expect no pleasure in this life without some abatement. I believe there may be persons who can keep themselves in tolerable good humour, by the strength of their own minds, in course of prosperity; but when crosses and disappointments take place, or

when they are constrained to part from what they hold most dear, if they cannot call in religion to their aid, they usually sink and despond. At least I have always found it so.

I have a good horse and a good road, and pretty good spirits likewise, considering that the more haste I make, the more I increase my distance from you. But when I reflect, that now your interest, as well as my own, calls me away, methinks I can scarcely go fast enough.

I am likely to perform the whole journey alone; but I want no company. It will always be a full entertainment to me, to recollect how very happy I have been in yours, and to animate myself with the pleasing hope, that in due time I shall be so again.

I am, &c. inviolably yours.

Liverpool, May 27.

I WAS forced to defer writing so long on Friday, that I was constrained to leave a thousand things unsaid, I therefore begin now in time. When you write next, (which I beg may always be by return of post,) let me know at what hours you usually rise, breakfast, dine, sup, and go to bed, that I may keep time with you or at least, attend you with my thoughts, if I should be otherwise engaged.

I cannot inform you that I have a ship yet; no one offers at present which Mr. M**** thinks good enough. Oh! that it was possible for you to go with me where I go, to cheer and enliven me amidst fatigues and difficulties, without sharing in them! How light would they then seem to me! But I submit. At least, happen what may, it will give me pleasure to think that my better, dearer part, is in safety at home.

I have now received yours of the 24th, and kissed it a hundred times! I beg you not to give way to uneasy apprehensions for me: for while you are well and easy, I am as happy as I wish to be during my absence from you. I should be sorry to find this absence become more easy to me by time. Let it suffice that I eat, drink, and sleep well, and am in health and spirits to do every thing that may appear necessary to procure us a future happy interview.

I acknowledge that at intervals, and when alone, the recollection of the past almost overpowers me with a tender concern; but do not be grieved for me, for I find a pleasure in the indulgence of such thoughts, which I would not part with upon any less consideration than that of being actually with you. I have written myself into tears now, and yet I feel a serenity and satisfaction, of

which, till I could call you mine, I had no perception. I cannot bemoan your absence without remembering, at the same time, how happy, and how long happy, I have been with you. This is a kind of bank stock, a treasure of which I cannot be deprived. And while I retain the recollection, that I have been so happy, I cannot be quite uncomfortable. But why do I say, I once was?—I am so still; for the consciousness that you love me, is a present and permanent comfort, and will be so at all times, and in all places. Your love was my principal desire; and, without it, all that you had besides in your power to bestow would have been dull and insipid.

Since you have kindly promised to write by every post, I wish we had a post every day.

Liverpool, June 29.

THOUGH, at taking up the pen, I have not a single sentence ready, I expect something will soon occur, when I write to you. I am going to set you a pattern, how to fill a sheet with nothing, or what is little better than nothing. But as I know you will make favourable allowances, I am content to appear at a disadvantage: I can submit that you should find tautologies and incoherence to excuse, provided I give you no cause to think me ungrateful.—

—Do not think of me as suffering or grieving—rather consider how happy you have made me, and that you have put me into a situation from which I can look upon princes without envy; and that, notwithstanding my regret for parting with you for a season, I would not change circumstances with any man in the kingdom. Of the many temporal blessings for which I am indebted to a gracious Providence, I set a higher value upon none than this, that I was formed with a heart capable of tender and disinterested affection, and directed to you for the object of it.

I am entirely yours.

Liverpool, July 10.

I MUST be up late to-night to attend the tide; but by writing to you, I can agreeably fill up the time, which might otherwise seem tedious.

I pity those who must fly to company and noise to fill up their vacant hours; and must be always changing the scene, though often for the worse. Whereas I, when I am most retired and soli-

tary, by directing my thoughts to you, have more pleasure than they can conceive of in their gayest moments! I say this the more assuredly, because I have formerly been on the other side of the question; and have sought satisfaction, in that manner of life, with so much earnestness, that I should, at least sometimes, have found it, had it really been to be met with. But I can scarcely recollect an hour of my past life with any pleasure, excepting the time I have passed in your company; and for that I think the innumerable troubles and sufferings I previously underwent not a dear purchase.

I was on shipboard this morning till past two o'clock. The weather was perfectly serene, the moon shone bright, and having nothing from within or without to discompose me, I passed the hours pleasantly in thinking of you. It was with great satisfaction I indulged the hope that you were then in a gentle slumber, under a safe and sure protection, and as free from inquietudes as myself. I then imagined the scene changing to what I must, in a little time, expect; when dark nights, heavy rains, violent winds, mountainous seas, and awful thunder, will sometimes all combine to alarm me. But this anticipation gives me no uneasiness at present; for even then I shall hope, that my dearer, better part, will be as calm and undisturbed as she is now. And as to the other half of myself, now on board the Duke of Argyle, it may be pleased with the expectation of an ample amends at the completion of the voyage. I shall probably at such times often repeat to myself a part of the verses which I addressed to you, at a time when I had little hope of obtaining the happiness I attempted to describe. They were then, therefore a mere rant, but they now express my settled judgment and choice:—

> These threat'ning seas, where wild confusion reigns,
> And yawning dangers all around appear,
> I value more than groves or flowery plains,
> Since 'tis the only way that leads to her.

Believe me, I should think it well worth the trouble of another journey to London, to have an interview with you, if only for a quarter of an hour. But it must not be, and I submit.

You either misunderstood the latter part of my letter, or I expressed myself awkwardly, which is most likely. I did not mean to say that you were wanting in religion;* I said, or meant to say, that as I thought myself not wanting in love, when I first of-

* Alas! neither of us had much sense of religion at that time. She was my idol, and perhaps I was her's. We looked little further for happiness than to each other.

fered you my heart, and yet found afterwards, that my notions of it had been greatly enlarged by a more intimate relation to you; so it might be a happy circumstance if we could be reciprocally helpful in improving each other's ideas of religion. If I seemed to take the upper hand, and affect the dictating strain, I ask your pardon. I ought to be sensible that I am not qualified for it, and to be more ready to learn than to teach.

I am, &c. yours.

Liverpool, July 20.

I RECEIVED your welcome letter of the 17th, which, when I had read it about twenty times over, furnished me with many pleasing reflections; and led me to compare my present state with the low, insipid life I must have led, even in the most affluent circumstances, if my sincere love had not obtained the only adequate prize, a reciprocal affection from you.

I am still of opinion that, at first, compassion and generosity induced you to think favourably of me. It did not suit with your temper to be unaffected by the pain and uneasiness of any one, much less of one who, though under a thousand disadvantages, you had reason to believe really loved you. And if I am not mistaken, you used some constraint with yourself, in the beginning, to bring your inclination to coincide with the power you had to make me happy. Thus I thought when I received your hand in marriage. Yet I was no less easy and secure, than if I had made the most successful improvement of our long acquaintance in gaining your heart. For I knew you too well to fear that after you had gone so far, you would stop short, till your affection was equal to my own.

I was pretty well assured in my own mind, that I should make it the chief business, or rather pleasure, of my life, to study and seize every opportunity of obliging you; and I was no less certain that the most trivial instance of such an intention would not be overlooked by you, or lost upon you. The event has answered my expectation. I have now the same confidence that you love me, as that I love you; and confidence which I would not exchange for any consideration the world could offer; a confidence which renders me superior to all the little entertainments that would allure me while I am here, and which I hope will satisfy and cheer me when, in a few days, I shall leave them all behind me. I long to be gone, for after parting with you, all scenes will be equally indifferent to me, till the happy hour of our re-union.

I thank you for your promise of writing weekly, and you may depend upon my not being behindhand with you. But remember, there is no regular post from Africa, and that the length of the passage of a ship is very precarious. I hope, therefore, you will not indulge discouraging thoughts, if you should not hear from me so soon as you may expect.

The weather has been dark and rainy. It is some time since I saw the north star.* When I am at sea, I shall watch it, at the hour we agreed upon, that I may have the pleasure of thinking that sometimes our eyes and thoughts are fixed upon the same object. I am, &c. yours.

Liverpool, July 29.

I THINK, if I stay here much longer, I must adopt your method, and follow your long letter with a very short one. For though I always take pleasure in writing, I begin to be ashamed of sending you little more than repetitions. I have expressed my affection (so far as my knowledge of words can express) in so many different forms and phrases, that I am quite at a loss for new ones. I must either write but little, as you do, or to little purpose, unless I begin again, as from the first; and in that case I believe my second round of letters would be very similar to the former, because I write from my feelings. My heart dictates every line.

And though my head often interposes, and observes that this expression is hardly grammar, the next not well turned, the third unnecessary, and so on; yet heart persists in his own way, and whatever occurs to him goes down upon the paper, in defiance of head's wise remonstrances. The contention arises sometimes to such a height, that head tells heart he raves and is an enthusiast. And heart calls head a conceited pedant, whose narrow views are confined to a little nicety and exactness in trifles, because he is a stranger to the emotions of love. As you know which side of the debate I favour, I need not tell you that when my strains are dull, it is none of poor heart's fault, who always does his best to please; but because head refuses to assist him, and leaves us both to shift for ourselves: though I often tell him that I will neither regard heart, head, nor hands, unless they all consider them-

* With this view we agreed upon an evening hour, as a little relief in absence, when we were to look at the north star, if the sky was clear, and be pleased with the probability that we might both be looking at it at the same minute. We knew but little then of the throne of grace, the central point, at which all who love the Lord duly meet (at whatever local distance) with him and with each other.

selves as belonging to you, and ready at all times for your service, as myself. It seems wrong to say, a man has his heart in his mouth when he is in great fear. I think he may properly be said to have his heart in his mouth, when he is capable of relating, in suitable terms, what really affects him. So, had I my heart at my finger's ends, I should perhaps write a letter worthy of your perusal. Till then I must beg you to accept what I send, because it is the best I have, I am yours, &c.

Liverpool, July 31.

I was kept some little time in suspense for yours of the 28th, which made it, if possible, more welcome when it came. Yet I am sorry that I hinted any thing to give you an anxious thought upon my account. The pain I complained of in my head, or a much more severe one, would be vastly more tolerable to me, than to hear that you are made uneasy. If it had not been a common thing, and usually soon over, I should not have mentioned it; but was unwilling to be guilty of a short letter, without assigning the true reason. I am much concerned that you should have such a weight upon your mind, and beg you, by all the regard you have for me, to strive against it.

If my dearest M*** will permit me to offer my best advice, and which I propose as a rule to myself—it is this—To endeavour to cast all your care upon him who has promised to care for us, if we will but put our trust in him. I long attempted to apply the specious maxims of philosophy, to soften the cares and trials of life, but I found them ineffectual and false; or, however they might have soothed some of the most ordinary and trivial inquietudes, yet I am very sure that, under this aggravated circumstance of separation from you, I should be miserable and without support, if religion did not assist me with nobler and more powerful motives of consolation. I go from you with the less regret, because I leave you in the hands of Him who is able, and, I trust, willing, to preserve you from all evil, and to make every thing easy to you. And I look forward to the various scenes of my intended voyage with cheerfulness, because I am sensible that, in the most remote inhospitable climes, a protecting Providence will surround me, and is no less to be depended on in the most apparent dangers, than in the greatest seeming security.

Let me again and again entreat you not to give way to melancholy; assure me that you will strive to be cheerful, or I protest I shall be unwilling to laugh, or even to smile, lest I should happen to be unseasonably merry when you are sad. Scarcely any thing

will inspire me with so much life and spirit, as the hope that you still possess that cheerfulness which used to be so engaging and so natural to you. Let me not have to charge myself with having spoiled your temper, unless you mean to frighten me indeed. I remember that before you quite consented to marry, you told me that I was pressing you to a life in which you should often regret the condition of happy M. C. And I endeavoured to persuade you, that you would only change pleasures, not lose them. I hope, if you will but help me by keeping up your spirits, I shall be able to make my words good. It will surely be my constant study to approve myself

Your obliged, affectionate, and grateful, &c.

At Sea, August 20.

THIS, I hope will go on shore by the pilot-boat, to inform you that I am now at sea, and with a prospect of a fair wind. I should be in high spirits but that the thought of being so many months at an uncertainty with respect to you softens me into tears. And your favour of the sixteenth, which I received last night, has renewed my anxiety for you. Let me beg of you to be as cheerful as possible, and to believe that the good Providence which, after a long separation, brought us together last year, when we were less interested in each other, will again join us to our mutual satisfaction. Once more, my dearest farewell! May the good God bless you with health and peace, and restore me, at a proper time, to your arms; and for what is to take place in the interval, I would make no conditions, but leave all to Him.

I cannot seal my letter without one more farewell. I need not put you in mind of writing by every probable opportunity. I press to my lips the paper that will be with you in a few days, while I must be kept from you for many months. Adieu.

I am yours, &c.

Ramsay, Isle of Man, August 24.

I COULD not have greater pleasure than in the opportunity which now offers me of relieving your uneasiness on my account. We have already met with unfavourable winds and weather; particularly a violent gale last night, and in narrow, dangerous navigation. The weather likewise was thick and dark. My own caution and diligence would soon have been of little use; the wind blew so that we could not carry our sails, and there was no

friendly port within our power. But my dependence upon God's providence kept me in tolerable peace. I was relieved by the same consideration which I believe distressed my shipmates, I mean that we could do nothing further.

I felt a persuasion, that if not so soon as we could wish, yet before it was too late, some alteration would take place in our favour. Accordingly, this morning the weather cleared up, and the wind abated, and enabled me to put into this place, where we anchored about two in the afternoon. The wind now rages more than before, and had we continued this night at sea, the consequence, (humanly speaking,) might have been fatal.

I readily inform you of the danger we have been in, now it is happily over; and hope you will not be alarmed because I am still liable to the like; but rather be comforted with the thought, that in the greatest difficulties the same great Deliverer is always present. The winds and the seas obey him. I endeavour, in every scene of distress, to recollect the seasons in my past life, in which, when I have given myself up for lost, I have been unexpectedly relieved. Instances of this kind have been frequent with me, some of them perhaps as remarkable as any that have been recorded; particularly my preservation in the Greyhound in the year '48, which can only be accounted for by an immediate and almost miraculous interposition of divine power. Then I apply the argument of David—The God who delivered me from the paw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear, will also deliver me from this Philistine. The God who preserved me from sinking and starving, (from both more than once,) who raised me friends among strangers, when I had disgusted all my own by my follies; and, above all, who has not only afforded me the necessaries of life, but indulged my softest wishes, obviated the many hindrances in my way, and made me happy in you—surely it would be not only ungrateful, but unreasonable, to distrust him now who has done so much for me hitherto.

I would be almost content that you should be indifferent concerning me during my absence, provided your love might revive upon my return, that so you might experience all the pleasing, and be exempted from all the painful, sensations of a married state. But then I must not know it; for I could hardly bear the noise and impertinence of the world, were I not enlivened by believing myself to be often upon your thoughts.

I confess at some times, I can hardly acquit myself from the charge of selfishness, that, for my own gratification, I should so earnestly press you to make your peace of mind dependent upon me. That you should be unhappy, and that I should be the occasion of it, would be painful to me indeed! But, I thank God,

all is well hitherto; and if you (as I doubt not) will kindly accept my utmost endeavours to oblige you on our future happy meetings, as a compensation for the anxiety you must now and then suffer, I hope I have not done wrong.

At Sea, September 3.

I WROTE you three letters, while in Ramsay Bay, but could not send the last on shore. We sailed from thence the 29th of August. The fair wind lasted but one day, which was not sufficient to run us clear of the land, and I had some trouble and fatigue till Saturday, when we got a breeze that has brought us into what the sailors call sea-room. The wind is now contrary again, but I have reason to be thankful we are so well as we are. I am at present little more than a gentleman-passenger; I shall, perhaps, have little care upon my head till we arrive in Africa, then I may expect care and trouble in abundance; but all will be welcome upon your account. Therefore, while I have leisure, I shall appropriate an hour every two or three days (sometimes, pehaps, daily) for writing to you, that I may have a sizeable packet ready at a short warning.

At Sea, September 10.

THERE is a strange mixture of pleasure and pain in the life I now lead. When I think of the regard which you express in your letters, (one of which, in their course, I re-peruse every post-day,) I feel a satisfaction which no wealth could buy from me. But when I think of the uneasiness it causes you, I could almost bear to be forgotten. I know I have said this often, but I must repeat it when you write in a melancholy strain. You charge me, in that which I have now at my lips, with making hours seem more tedious to you than days and weeks did formerly. I am sorry. I beg you to strive to be cheerful.

Though I feel absence painful indeed, I do not deserve much pity, because I am absent for your sake. I am likewise engaged in active business, and have some new scene offering every day, to relieve my mind; besides, I have been long used to suffer, and did not begin to know what peace or pleasure meant till I married you. On the contrary, you, by marriage, exposed yourself to cares and anxieties to which you was before a stranger; and you have done enough to make me happy, if I could be happy alone;

but that is impossible. Unless you are happy likewise, money, pleasure, health, nay, love itself will not make me amends.

At Sea, September 14.

Last post-day I finished a large sheet, and did not leave room to write my name, for I had crowded one hundred and eighty-one lines into it. Should this come first to your hand, you may wonder where I could find subject matter. Nothing (necessary business excepted) seems deserving my attention but religion and love; the one my constant support, the other my constant solace: and was I not favoured with some taste for these, I should find a settled gloom in my heart, though placed in the gayest scenes of life. For at the age of twenty-five, I have seen enough to force my assent to the confession which experience extorted from Solomon in his latter days, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." I mean, all that can be possessed exclusive of these two principles; but under their regulation the scene is changed, and the whole creation blooms with beauty.

Religion, rightly understood, is doubtless sufficient of itself to bear us through all the changes of this world, and guide us to a better. But our gracious Master has made us capable of tender and social affections, to add to the comfort of the present life. I know nothing that is required of us as a duty, but what is both consistent with our happiness, and has a tendency to promote it. Nor is there a single gratification prohibited, that is not, in its natural consequences, productive of pain or disgust. But you will say, why all this to me? You are guilty of no excess, (except your partial regard to me may be deemed one.) I answer, it was a grateful reflection on the goodness of God, and a sense of what I owe him, especially for giving you to me, directed my pen; and to whom could I so properly address these thoughts as to your dear self, since to you I am secondarily indebted for my present peace?

At Sea, September 18.

I suppose that I am now about half way to Sierra Leone, and not less than fifteen hundred miles from my dearest—a great distance, and hourly increasing! But it is not sufficient to divide you from my thoughts. I have read three more of your letters, and as often as I take them in hand, I have a pleasure in the repeated marks of your affection, which nothing else could afford.

Although I am obliged to go to sea, and what is more, to Guinea, I would not change conditions with the most wealthy bachelor on shore. No fox-hunter can follow his hounds with more alacrity than I now traverse the pathless ocean in quest of a country which, but for your sake, I should be as earnest to avoid. I am obliged to you, not only for the happiness I have found, and hope to find, at home, but for a pleasure while abroad, in what would otherwise be very unpleasant. When I left Africa in the Greyhound, I seemed resolved never to return thither again; but my resolution was formed when I had no hope that you would ever make it worth my while; and I knew that nothing else could. But upon the encouragement (though slender) which you gave me when I arrived there in the Brownlow, every thing appeared with a different aspect. And though, perhaps, few persons in the same space of time, have met with more dangers and hardships than I then did, I believe no one heard me complain; because, what I had in view upon the end of the first voyage, so fixed my thoughts, that I could consider nothing as a real hardship that had a probability of being acknowledged and rewarded by you; I ventured all upon your honour, and was not disappointed. If the bare hope of your love was such a support, judge, if you can, how the proofs I have since obtained of it must influence me!

At Sea, October 16.

I am much obliged to Mr. Addison, from whom I took the hint of setting apart stated times for writing to you, and reviewing your dear letters. This expedient is a great relief in your absence. When I awake in the morning, if it be what I call a post-day, I am no less pleased than children are with the thoughts of a fair-day.

We have not yet seen the land, but I deem myself within one hundred miles of the Bananas, which is the first place I propose to call at. There I spent a part of my wretched time in thraldom, of which you have often heard me speak.

Little did I think, in my sorrowful days there, when I went almost naked, so that my skin in many parts of my body has been blistered by the heat of the sun—where sometimes I have not had half a good meal in the course of a month, where I was reduced so low as

> ———to be the sport of slaves,
> Or what more wretched yet, their pity——

I say little did I think that I should revisit that place in a state to excite the envy of those who would once have scorned to let me

sit in the same house with them. Still less had I reason to hope that, you, whom, in the midst of my distress, I passionately loved, would requite me as you have done. With such a hope, I could have borne all pretty well. But Providence was mercifully intent to make my situation completely miserable for a time, in order to preserve me from that utter ruin into which my folly and wickedness might otherwise have plunged me. I have nothing now to ask, but a disposition to be thankful to Him, the author, and to you, the appointed instrument and mean, of my recovery. I can now look with pity upon all that the vulgar account great and honourable. I pity poor kings, as sincerely as I do a poor beggar; and consider wit, learning, and fame, likewise, as mere trifles, compared with our mutual love, which may it please God to continue; I was going to say to increase, but that is unnecessary.

At Sea, October 19.

This morning we discovered the land of Guinea. It is exactly four months from the day I took my mournful leave of you. I hope my next post-day's pleasure will be dated from my intended port. The passage from England has not been the shortest, but remarkably pleasant and free from disaster.

Last night we were disturbed by a tornado, which I believe I have told you is a violent squall of wind, accompanied with heavy rain, thunder, and, lightning. The darkness of the night added to the horror of the scene. But with proper care, under the blessing of providence, these boisterous visitants, though very troublesome, are seldom dangerous; nor do they often last above an hour. At these times my mind is generally calm, when every body, and every thing, is in confusion around me; which is in a great measure owing to my sense of your love, and a hope that you are sleeping in safety. If it please God to permit me a happy return to you, a short interval will fully recompense me for the inconveniences of a whole voyage; and all the rest will be clear again.

If I do but win your acknowledgment, that I am not guilty of the stupid ingratitude too common with many of my sex, who undervalue their most desired blessings, merely because they are possessed of them; but that my regard and behaviour, since our marriage, has been answerable to the professions I made beforehand—I say, if you believe this, I shall think nothing hard or troublesome, that may confirm your good opinion of me, which I certainly prefer in itself, to all its pleasing consequences; for I am disinterestedly Yours, &c.

Sierra Leone, October, November.

We arrived here the 24th of October; a hurry of business has forced me to pass ten days without writing to you.

Though this country is not England, it does nearly as well for me in your absence; and, on the other hand, if you could live here with me, without inconvenience to yourself, the gloomy mountains and forests of Sierra Leone would be to me as a *Blenheim*. They who pity me because I am not fond of what *they* call pleasure, know not the motives which render me superior to it. I was once no less eager after their pleasures than they are now. But you have so refined my taste since, that nothing short of yourself can thoroughly please me. As it is midnight, I only add my prayers for your peaceful repose.

Sierra Leone, November 8.

I have enclosed you, under another cover, two sheets of the largest paper, full on all sides, containing near four hundred lines; and I have as much more ready to send by the next opportunity. If it please God to continue my health and welfare, my stock will be still increasing, for I generally devote some time, twice a week at least, for writing to you. But, for fear any thing should prevent my packet from reaching you, I commit these few lines to the care of Mr. M****.

I think, were I allowed two wishes short of the happiness of being with you, the first should be, that you might have early information that I am well; and the second, that I might have a letter from you, informing me that you were well, and easy, when you wrote. I do not impose upon you by saying that I prefer your peace to my own. I would do or suffer much to obtain a letter from you; and then resign it, unopened, rather than miss one opportunity of writing to you. If I am favoured with any good quality, I think it is a grateful temper, which makes me glad to acknowledge and return the smallest favour I receive, even from an indifferent person. Judge, then, what an effect the many endearing obligations I am under to you, heightened by the ardency of my affection, must have upon me! It is upon this principle that I not only *submit* to the scenes in which I am now engaged, with *patience*, but *embrace* them with *cheerfulness*. Had I been able to live always with you, I think I should not have loved you less; but it would not have been in my power to show it so much. But I hope, now you find that, for your sake, I can take pleasure in my very pain, you will do me the justice to be-

lieve, that the confidence you have reposed in me has not been misplaced. I commend you, upon my knees, to the blessing and protection of God.

Bananas, November 21.

Since I came hither, I have been cruizing about in the boat in quest of trade, without one leisure evening for writing to you, which has been my chief inconvenience. For the vicissitudes of winds and weather, the scorching days and damp foggy nights, are to me but mere trifles. I have lately had a visit from my quandam black mistress, P. I. [those two letters pronounced distinctly, and not in one syllable, as Pi, exactly sound her name,] with whom I lived at the Plantanes. I treated her with the greatest complaisance and kindness; and if she has any shame in her, I believe I made her sorry for her former ill treatment of me. I have had several such occasions of taking the noblest kind of revenge upon persons who once despised and used me ill. Indeed I have no reason to be angry with them; they were, what they little intended, instrumental to my good. If my situation, at that time, had been more favourable, I should probably have missed you. I may say, with an old Grecian, if I had not been ruined, I should have been ruined indeed!

At Sea, December 3.

Though this is not my post-night, I am willing to write, because I am behindhand, and because it is the most pleasant way of filling up a leisure hour. It was not inclination, but business, that made me limit myself to twice a week, for it would be an agreeable employment to write to you twice a day, if I had nothing to call me off. But, however my hands and head are engaged, my heart is always with you. It can be but seldom, if at all, that you are out of my thoughts for five minutes together. Whether I am visiting, trading, or watching, your idea is still before my eyes.

I would give something for such a sympathetic needle and dial-plate as is mentioned in the Spectator, that we might be able to correspond without being interrupted by distance. But perhaps I am better without it, for I should hardly attend to any thing else. And we already have what is more valuable, a sympathy of mind and affection. I believe, if we could compare notes, we should find that our thoughts are often engaged in the same manner, at the same time.

Shebar, October 14.

I SUPPOSE you have often observed, for I have, (and, to my credit be it spoken, we think pretty much alike,) that what we very much hope for, or fear, more seldom happens than such things as are quite out of our thoughts, and beyond our prevention. An instance of this lately, I shall mention, by way of change of subject. I went on shore at this place lately on account of trade; and the next morning, walking by the sea-side to look for the ship, she could not be seen. Upon this I sent off a boat, which returned in the evening, and brought me word that they had been some leagues beyond the place where I left her, but could discern nothing of her. I leave you to judge of my anxiety. I could not account for it, the weather being perfectly fine, and we had too few slaves on board to cause any disturbance.

For once, and for a few minutes, I almost wished myself unmarried; for the most sensible part of my trouble was, that, whatever difficulties I may meet with, I cannot now suffer alone. I was at length, in some degree, relieved by the dependence which I always endeavour to maintain upon the good Providence which has done so much for me hitherto.

I put to sea with two boats which I had with me, and after sailing some hours, discovered the ship, when I was upon the point of giving up all hope of ever seeing her again. I soon reached her, and found all well on board. The night I left her, had been dark and hazy: she had dragged her anchor and had slipped to sea, and was carried a good way by the current, unperceived by the watch upon deck, who doubtless had been careless, and perhaps asleep. I brought her safely back again yesterday. So that this adventure was only to caution me, and to teach me never to think myself quite secure.

Shebar, December 21.

MY DEAREST,

MUST I imitate the news-writers? They, in a scarcity of foreign news, rather than fall short of their usual number of paragraphs, entertain their readers with relations of strange monsters, apparitions, wonderful sights in the air, or terrible noises under ground. For they take *news*, in the strict sense of the word, to signify any thing that has not been heard of before, whether true or false.

Most of my letters to you remind me of Æsop's feast, which,

though consisting of several dishes, were all tongues, only dressed in different ways. Thus, whether I write in a grave or a jocular strain, the subject is still love, love; which is as inseparable from my idea of you, as heat from that of fire.

Cape Mount, December 31.

I SENT you from Sierra Leone two sheets, like the two I now enclose, and I have two more in readiness for the next ship, and shall think myself happy, if I can employ my leisure to afford you any entertainment. I am apt to grieve at the probability of my voyage proving longer than I expected; but I am soon checked by considering how much cause I have for thankfulness. For I am in perfect health, and have met with no harm or disappointment hitherto. I am informed there is a ship upon the coast which has letters for me; I hope to be with her in a few days. My mind revives at the expectation; for then I shall be able to boast of a real pleasure in your absence, besides that which I find in writing to you. It is now the last night, and almost the last minute of the year, being very near twelve o'clock. How can I conclude the year better than by writing to you, and praying to the Lord to bless you, and to spare me a little longer to love and deserve you, and to be happy with you?

1751.

Rio Junque, January 8.

I WAS prevented writing on Friday by a violent pain in my head, which was perhaps partly occasioned by not receiving a letter from you. I have one from Mr. M***, dated October 24. He promised to let you know when he intended to write, but I would hope, for my own peace, he neglected it. For I am sure you would not miss the opportunity, if you were able to hold a pen. I must now wait till I arrive at Antigua. Then I hope to be gratified.

When I meet with any thing cross, or contrary to my wish, I dare not now complain; because in gaining you I secured the principal aim of my life: a real good, which, if set in opposition to the little disappointments I meet with from without, outweighs them all. Nor need I envy others their wealth or prosperity, when it is a thousand to one if any of them have such a dear M*** as I can call my own. I should therefore be sorry to change with the very best of them, in all points; or to part with a small portion of your regard for any worldly consideration.

promised satisfaction of a happy meeting, are topics which he dwells upon with equal elegance and passion. Having said so much of Pliny, I must add in my own behalf, that I love as well as he did, though I cannot express myself so well; but for plain, downright affection and gratitude, I would not yield to the best Pliny that ever wore a head.

Shebar, March 5.

It was an expression of Cato, that it was more honourable to be a good husband, than a great senator. The point of honour seems to have varied since his time. We now find too many who value themselves upon a contrary character, and yet are not the worse received in company, not even by those of your sex; who, I think, both in justice and compassion, should unite in despising the man who dares to use a deserving woman ill, because he has not a heart to value her.

But had Cato said, there was more profit and comfort in being a good husband than in being an unmarried emperor, he would have said but the truth. And however fashionable it might become to dispute or contradict this maxim, there would always be a favoured few, who would not be disputed or laughed out of their experience. And it is only by experience it can be known. We need not wonder, therefore, if a married life is thought lightly of by those who judge of it only by hearsay. For a man might as well pretend to paint a sound, as to describe the various sensibilities connected with a happy marriage, in such a manner as to make a stranger understand them.

Shebar, March 22.

A desire of rendering myself agreeable to you has long been a motive of my conduct. This I may well style my *ruling passion*. I was changeable as the weather till my regard for you fixed me, and collected all my aims to the single point of gaining you. Then my faculties, which before were remiss, were roused, and indolence gave way to application. It has been observed, that those who have wearied themselves in vainly searching after the philosopher's stone, have often found out useful things which they had no thought of seeing. So I, in the pursuit of the methods by which I hoped to influence you, obtained, unawares, advantages of another kind. The desire of pleasing you, insensibly made me more acceptable to others. In one essential respect, the comparison happily fails. These philosophers were poorly rewarded for

their trouble by their petty discoveries, while their principal object was still unattained. Whereas I not only found the *means* leading to my chief desire pleasant and profitable, but in due time completely gained my *end*. I long for the opportunity of thanking you again and again.

Shebar, March 29.

THE Spectator tells us, that Socrates, in discoursing upon marriage, placed it in such an advantageous light, that he induced all his auditors to marry as fast as possible. And yet it seems he was, at that time, himself wedded to a noted shrew: so that he could hardly draw many persuasive arguments from his own experience. Surely, had he been matched like me, he would have spoken with still greater emphasis. Methinks, if I had his eloquence, I could delight to speak on this subject from morning to night. I could tell the foolish world how strangely they wander from the path of happiness, while they seek that satisfaction in luxury, wealth, or ambition, which nothing but mutual love can afford.

I give and take a good deal of raillery among the sea captains I meet with here. They *think* I have not a right notion of life, and I *am sure* they have not. They say I am melancholy; I tell them they are mad. They say, I am a slave to one woman, which I deny; but can prove that some of them are mere slaves to a hundred. They wonder at my humour; I pity theirs. They can form no idea of my happiness; I answer, I think the better of it on that account; for I should be ashamed of it if it was suited to the level of those who can be pleased with a drunken debauch, or the smile of a prostitute. We shall hardly come to an agreement on these points; for they pretend to appeal to experience against me. Just so some of the poor objects in Bedlam, while raving in straw and dirt, mistake their chains for ornaments of gold, announce themselves to be kings or lords, and are firmly persuaded that every person who pities them is out of his wits.

Rio St. Paul's, April 17.

MAY you always feel a satisfaction equal to that which the receipt of your two dear letters last night gave me, and I need wish you nothing further till we happily meet. Could any thing enhance the value of such marks of your affection, it would be my receiving them so unexpectedly. For I had long given them over for lost, or worse than lost, exposed to the ill-bred curiosity

of some sea-bear, who, incapable of understanding, much more of valuing, your delicacy, might have insulted them by some shocking jest, to the diversion of his brother animals, over a can of nasty flip. Do not think I extend the direction of Divine Providence too minutely, if I suppose there was something remarkable in my getting them at last, (for they have been transferred to six or seven different vessels successively.) They are of great importance to me: they could not have arrived at a more seasonable juncture to revive my spirits, which are sometimes a little flagged by the tediousness and difficulties of the voyage. I thank God that I possess them safe, and have the pleasure to find the wax whole, as it came from under your seal. I could almost hug every dirty fellow through whose hands they have passed, for taking such care of them. It will employ me agreeably for some days to answer them periodically, if you will allow the word in that sense—I mean, to comment upon every period.

Rio St. Paul's, April 19.

You wonder that such a smart girl as Miss H**** should throw herself away upon an unsuitable husband. But are you sure that your own judgment has not been often called in question upon this head? It would ill become me to blame her for matching at an apparent disparity, because to such a partiality in your conduct I owe my happiness. And though, upon comparison, I should prove a little more tolerable than he, yet you are so much superior to her, as still to leave a proportionate difference between us. I believe the motives which induced you to give me your hand, are not understood by at least one half of our acquaintance. How often must they have said, "What, the accomplished, easy, polite Miss C**** married to that awkward piece of formality, whose ridiculous behaviour was for years a standing jest amongst us! Strange!"—but I could tell them that you yourself, with all your ease and politeness, were alloyed with a quality almost as singular and unfashionable as any of mine; I mean an artless generosity of mind, upon the knowledge of which I raised my first wishes, and to which I am indebted for their completion. My love to you occasioned my troubles, my troubles inspired you with compassion, that compassion encouraged me to perseverance, which long persevered in, induced first your good opinion, then your good-will, and thus, by pleasing gradations, I reached the happy summit of my wishes. That I may be always worthy of my privilege, and that you may be no looser by my gain, is my constant and earnest prayer!

Rio St. Paul's, April 30.

Now for a word of condolence on the catastrophe of poor Fancy. I am really sorry, having a complacence for every thing that has, in any degree, the merit of pleasing you. Besides, he was so good-natured, and had a fidelity and assiduity which might shame many who walk upon two legs. But when I recollect his manner of life, I must, notwithstanding his premature death, pronounce him to have been a happy dog. While many poor puppies have wandered forlorn in the streets, exposed to the gripe of the butcher's surly mastiff, the kick of the weary and peevish traveller, or of the more heavy iron-hooſed horse, and many similar calamities, highly favoured Fancy was brought up within doors, in peace and plenty, and, to say all in a word, indulged with your smiles and caresses. While I—what would I give to be so caressed and smiled upon! If after all this he came to a violent end, many of the greatest heroes have been served so before him. So the mighty Cæsar, after all his honours and success, was seized by mad dogs, (that were fawning upon him a little before,) who bit him (as we are told) in three-and-twenty places, till he died. Cæsar and Fancy equally afford a proof, that no situation in life is perfectly secure. But enough of trifling.

Mana, May 3.

You know the grove where we have sometimes walked together; but where I more frequently passed many hours by myself. I call that grove my chapel, and my study. There I have offered many prayers for your welfare. There I have formed plans for my future conduct, and considered in what manner I might best deserve and return your love. There is not a tree in the whole walk, but, if it could speak, and would speak truth, might bear testimony to my regard for you. For I believe you know that it is my frequent custom to vent my thoughts aloud, when I am sure that no one is within hearing. I have had many a tender soliloquy in that grove concerning you, and, in the height of my enthusiasm, have often repeated your dear name, merely to hear it returned by the echo. These and many other harmless things, which the insensible and the mercenary would term fooleries, I have done; and that not only when a desponding lover, but when a happy one. I am so far from being influenced by that detestable maxim, Possession quenches love!—that I can hardly allow my affection for you before marriage the same name which I would express (if I could) what I now feel.

Cape Mount, May 7.

I HAVE been through fire and water for you to-day. That is to say, I was exposed for some hours to a more scorching sun than you can conceive of; and then cooled, when I landed, by the surf, or violent surges of the sea breaking upon the shore. I charge all my fatigue to your account, because you only are able to pay me for it; and for your sake it is all welcome. I am now warm with the hope of quitting this troublesome coast in a few days.

Shebar, May 14.

MY last broke off abruptly. I was ill, and disconcerted by an incident in business, which might have had bad consequences. But I am well again, and all is to rights. A happy restoration to you is the principal end I propose, and if I attain it, I am not very solicitous whether my passage homewards be long or short, pleasant or otherwise, so that our meeting be safe and happy at last. The scenes of life I have passed through have taught me a degree of patience and thankfulness, which support me under ordinary troubles; and I hope the God in whom I desire to trust, will preserve me from very heavy ones. I seem persuaded that he who has done so much for me, will, at a proper time, do more, if I do not put hindrances in my own way by impatience and unthankful complaints. In the mean time my assurance of your love is my constant support and feast. I must not expect to slide through life without meeting any rubs. If it would please God, I could wish to bear all my pains by myself, and to enjoy all my real pleasures with you.

Shebar, May 17.

THOUGH in this country there is no winter, properly speaking, the different parts of the year are no less different than in England. For about seven months the weather is remarkably fair, with light winds, and seldom a threatening cloud to be seen. In the remaining five, we have either incessant heavy rains, or sudden storms of wind, with violent thunder and rain. This uncomfortable season is now commencing, but I hope we shall not suffer much by it, as I expect to sail, and change my climate in a few days. I only mention it as an excuse for any faults in my letters, which I would have you impute to my situation, which I leave you

to guess at as well as you can. Two hundred people confined in a small vessel, in bad weather, occasion noise, dirt, and trouble enough. Besides the common business and care incident to other ships, we have a large number of slaves, that must be attended, fed, cleaned, and guarded against, let what will stand still. When I compare a day passed in this manner, with one of the happy days I have known with you, I can scarcely imagine a greater contrast. But when I turn my thoughts forward, and indulge the hope of being restored to you again, that prospect reconciles me to all that is before me.

At Sea, May 24.

At length, my dearest M***, I have lost sight of Africa, and have been three days on my passage towards Antigua. Innumerable dangers and difficulties, which, without a superior protection, no man could escape or surmount, are, by the goodness of God, happily over. I now think myself every hour drawing nearer to you; or, (which is the next comfort to it of which I am capable,) to the receipt of more letters from you, to confirm my prayers for your welfare, and for the continuance of your love. Of the latter I cannot doubt for a moment. I think myself as unalterably fixed in your affection, as I feel you are in mine. This persuasion, so needful to my happiness, is riveted in my heart, and I would not part with it for mines of gold. Yet there is something inexpressibly engaging to read the tender acknowledgment under your own dear hand. You will quite spoil me for a letter-writer. The great beauty of an epistolary style is conciseness; I seem rather to study circumlocution, when writing to you, that I may make some amends in quantity, for what I fall short in the quality of my letters, if compared with yours. It is now ten in the evening. I am going to walk the deck and think of you; and, according to my constant custom, to recommend you to the care and protection of God.

At Sea, June 27.

Sometimes my letters resemble the course of a hare. I digress from one thing to another, till I make a fair round, and return to the subject from which I began. At other times, like the fox, I lead you a chase right out, leap over all the bounds of regularity, and you cannot guess, by the manner of my setting off, whither or how far I may lead you; nor can I tell myself; but

fear I tire you to keep pace with my rambles. But if, upon the whole, you are pleased or amused, my end is answered. In this my desultory way, I am almost at the bottom of my twelfth large sheet, and am now expecting to see Antigua every minute, where I hope to be furnished with new materials. I had but two opportunities of writing from the coast, and shall therefore carry eight sheets with me, which I shall disperse homeward as fast as I can, as occasions offer, for my justification, lest you should in some anxious moment suspect me of negligence. Though I rather believe you are disposed to judge favourably of me, even if appearances should be against me. Indeed your idea is constantly with me, and I hope in due time I shall prove the reverse of Æsop's dog, and, by long gaping after the shadow, come at length to repossess the substance. Eager as I am for the receipt of your expected letters, my heart goes often pit-a-pat, lest I should hear that you have been ill or uneasy. But I check my fears by considering that I have committed you to Him who is able to take better care of you than I could, if I was present with you. To Him I again recommend you, praying that we may at length be restored to each other, and that I may always prove worthy of your affection.

Antigua, July 4.

As I have been for three nights almost sleepless, I can hardly keep my eyes open, not even to write to you. But I have been long providing against busy times, and now enclose you three sheets as a specimen; and have six more ready to send, as ships may offer. The business of this is chiefly to acquaint you, that I arrived here in safety yesterday, and have received your several favours of the 20th of December, 11th of January, and 2d of April. That which you mention to have written in October has not come to hand. But my joy for those received has been so great, that I have not been at leisure sufficiently to regret the one which is lost. Had not the news of my dear father's death been accompanied by these confirmations of your health, and your affection to me, I should have felt it more heavily, for I loved and revered him. But enough of this. My tears drop upon the paper.

Tell me, my dearest, if you can how two opposite passions find room for exercise in my breast at the same time? I rejoice greatly in the consciousness of your love, and I sorrow greatly for my father's death. These different emotions seem not to interfere. But I have now given vent to my grief and shall not in-

dulge it. Religion, which is the best philosophy, has, I hope, prepared me, in a measure, for every event; at least, for all but one; that one, indeed, I cannot think of without trembling.

Antigua, July 5.

You caution me to be careful of my own life for your sake, which is indeed the most engaging argument you can assign; for I know nothing but yourself that makes a continuance in this life very desirable unless as it is a state of improvement for a better. But, if I durst, I should a little blame the strength of your expressions upon the point. God only knows which of us must depart first; but it is probable, one must survive the knowledge of the other's death. If it should be my lot, I cannot tell how I should be able to bear it; but I would wish our love to be so regulated, that neither of us should be rendered miserable by a separation; but rather be supported by a well-grounded hope, that a few more rolling years would re-unite us never more to part. In a world liable to such unexpected and unavoidable changes, there is no probability of being happy, even in the enjoyment of our own wishes, unless we hold them in subordination to the will and wisdom of God, who is the author and giver of every blessing.

Your last letter is the best, because the longest, and because you seem to have written it when you were tolerably easy, and at peace in your mind. If this was in any measure owing to hearing from me, I hope you will be peaceful for the remainder of the voyage, for I expect frequent opportunities of writing, and I am not likely to let one of them slip.

Antigua, July 9.

This is my fourth letter in five days. I write by every ship, that you may have the most early information possible of my arrival and welfare, to relieve the anxiety which, I fear, you must have felt; and I now send the two last of the eight sheets I brought with me. Should all my packets arrive safely, and nearly together, your love must strengthen your patience, or you will be wearied by the perusal. But I believe you will receive them with as much pleasure as I wrote them. I cannot more strongly express my confidence of your affection. I have, perhaps, told you before, that, when we married, I had not deserved much of your positive love; but I knew, from your temper, that I might be sure your heart was free from any other engagement

or preference; and for the rest, I depended on your generosity, and on my own sincere endeavours to deserve you. But even this confidence in myself, and in you, did not induce me to expect you would advance so fast as in a few months to overtake me in the race, in which I set out seven long years before you.

Antigua, July 23.

Your last letter has the only additional excellence which I could wish for in a letter from you; I mean the length. You are greatly improved indeed. At the end of five years, with some difficulty, I drew six lines from you. In less than two years afterwards, I obtained eleven lines and a half more. After marriage, you stipulated to return one line for my two; and though you fell something short of your agreement, I acquitted you; for besides that one of your lines is worth ten of mine, I considered that, at the time of articling, you could not foresee that I should be so unreasonably prolix as I have proved. Could any one who knew us both have imagined that you should already imitate me as far as one hundred and twenty lines? Yes, any one who knew us both, perhaps, might expect it. But if he only knew me, I think he would not. When I say you imitate me, I mean only in the length; for you leave me in full possession of my tautologies, perplexities, and repetitions. I have thought that your writing so correctly was, in some measure owing to your brevity. But I was mistaken. You have shown me, that as you have the art of imprinting your character and spirit in three or four lines, so you can, if you please, enlarge to as many hundred, without sinking below yourself in a single expression.

I admire the delicate turn of your writing. You need not be careful who sees your letters; for though you touch upon the most interesting subjects in a manner quite intelligible to me, a stranger could pick little out of them. I would imitate you in this, if I could, while conveyances are so uncertain. However, I hope that if my flights were exposed to public view, there would be nothing found but what tended to your honour, though, perhaps, my own prudence might be called in question. I might even be excused by competent judges but in the crowd we call the world, what a mixture of wonder, envy, and contempt, should I excite! How would they exclaim, This is mere cant, bombast, enthusiasm! I hope most of my poor essays to thank you, have merit enough to meet with such a reception from the ignorant and selfish. Imagine Handel playing one of his best pieces to a parcel of gypsies, who, till then, had only heard such music as gyp-

sies are accustomed to; would they not gape and stare at him, and wish that he had done tuning his instrument, and would give them something worth their hearing? Or if a clown, who had seen a puppet-show, should go to the theatre, in hopes of something to make him laugh, and hear Garrick repeating the soliloquy, "To be, or not to be," he would probably wonder what the audience could find to admire or applaud in such dry stuff. It grows late or I could run over fifty more instances of the readiness of people to despise what they do not understand. And then I would endeavour to prove, (I think it no difficult task, that this folly is never more completely absurd, than when the dull, or the cruel, or the cross, or the unamiable, or the envious, or the selfish, or the abandoned, affect to undervalue the happiness of the marriage state.

Antigua, August 4.

You will perceive by the date, that this is one of the days which I pass, as much as I can, in retirement and reflection. My correspondence with you falls in with my design. I hope a mutual affection will be rather a help than a hindrance to us in our most important concerns. Not one of the many blessings which God has bestowed upon me excites in me a more ardent desire to be thankful than that which he has given me in you. And the remembrance of our past endearments is a powerful preservative, to keep me from low and unworthy pursuits. In like manner, nothing reconciles me so much to the troubles and hazards incident to my situation, as the thought that I endure them for your sake, and that from you I expect a recompense answerable to my wishes. I hope I may say this, without derogating from those motives which ought to have no less weight with me if you were out of the question. My meaning is, that I ought to be very thankful to the goodness of the Lord, who has thus ordered my duty and my inclinations to go hand in hand, and in a manner bribed me to my true interest. And this enhances my regard to you; that I am not only indebted to you for my pleasure here, but that you will be a mean of preparing me for those which I hope for hereafter. This is the proper foundation for abiding love. A love like mine is calculated for all seasons and changes, equally suited to enlarge the advantages of prosperity beyond the comprehension of a stranger, and to gild the uneasy hours of pain and trouble. I may lose money, health, liberty, or limbs; but while it pleases God to preserve my memory, nothing can rob me of the consciousness that you are mine, and that I am favoured

with the dearest place in your heart. The vessel is now under sail, so I must conclude. I hope to follow her soon. Adieu, my dearest! Believe me to be almost continually praying for you, and studying how to approve myself Yours, &c.

At Sea, August 14.

I am so pleased with writing to you, and so used to it, that, though I hope to deliver you my packet with my own hand, I cannot desist. I now begin a book for your entertainment, and shall only mark the date here and there, reserving my bounden subscription to the end.

I suppose most people when entering the marriage state promise themselves much satisfaction; and, I am afraid, very many are greatly disappointed. Why has it been otherwise with me? How was it that at a time when I was mistaken and wrong in every other part of my conduct, I should direct my addresses to, perhaps, the only one in the sphere of my acquaintance who could make me happy? Undoubtedly the hand of God was in it. How wretched must I have been, had my heart been so closely engaged to a giddy, inconsiderate, or mercenary character! Besides my other obligations, I must always consider you as the principal instrument, employed by divine Providence, to wean me from those errors and evils which otherwise must have soon issued in my destruction. This will be a motive of regard which will always remain, though length of time should abate the force of many other endearing considerations; and when life has nothing more in itself desirable, I shall have reason with my dying breath, to bless God for the influence you have had over me.

You will not wonder that I write in a serious strain, when I tell you that I am sitting by a person in his last agonies, and who, only five days since, was healthy and florid. This is my surgeon, who, by an obliging behaviour during the whole voyage, has gained a great share of my regard. But I fear he must go—cut short in the vigour of life, amidst a heap of amusing purposes and prospects if he reached England!

August 19.

My poor surgeon is gone, and buried in the sea; a sepulchre of which, while living, he could not bear the thought. But it makes no difference to him now. Besides my personal regard, I shall miss him upon your account. For, from the time I knew

him so well as to judge him worthy of the subject, I have often found some relief by venting my mind to him in talking about you. I have none with me now but mere sailors, to whom I should degrade your name if I mentioned it, and shall therefore keep my pleasures and my pains to myself. Yet now and then, when I am sure I am not overheard, I breath out your name, "My dearest M***," and find music in the sound.

We have had very bad weather lately, and I should have been afraid of a hurricane, (for this is the season,) but that my dependence upon the providence of God is become almost habitual. I have had so many and such great deliverances, within these few years, that I hope I shall learn, by degrees, to think myself in no more danger in one time or place, than in another, while I am in the path of duty, and do not place confidence in my own abilities, or mistake the means for the end.

August 21.

I SUBMIT, with due deference, to your judgment in my own favour, and will entertain as good an opinion of myself as I can, with any regard to truth. Indeed, if I am not better than formerly by my connexion with you, I must be quite incorrigible. For a proof that I once was a very poor creature, I could, if you would not be angry, cite your own opinion upon several occasions, and summon more witnesses than two or three. I divert myself sometimes with the recollection of what passed between Mrs. P** and me, when I first saw her after we were married. It was to this purpose:—"Dear Madam, wish me joy."—"Of what, Sir?—"Of my marriage."—"With whom, pray?"—"With my dear M***."—"What M***! M*** C***?"—"Yes, she owned that name lately, but has now cast it off, and desires you would know her by mine."—"Ah!" says she, sighing and shaking her head both at once, "I wish it was true." Her sister interposed —"He only jests." She answered, "Then he is much altered; very lately he would not have jested upon this subject."—"No, really, it is downright earnest; why are you so backward to credit it?"—"Nay—only—because—I do not know—stay—no —it is impossible." When she had repeated this, or something like it, two or three times, I begged her to collect herself, and give me her reasons. She did not care to speak out, but hinted an unsuitableness of tempers; that you was cheerful and sprightly, and I heavy and dull; and though I might be mad enough to match at a disparity you were more mistress of yourself than to make such a wild experiment. This she minced up as complai-

santly as she could, not to offend me; but I am confident her real sentiments, and those of most of our acquaintance, were as I have expressed.

I told her she had judged rightly of me, but it was plain she did not so well know you. At length she was convinced—but still insisted it was strange, it was passing strange; but that she should love you better than ever. "With all my heart, Madam," I replied, "and so shall I likewise."

August 28.

When I am in easy circumstances, I try to heighten my pleasure by the recollection of past times, when I have been much otherwise. When I am in a safe harbour, or on shore, I think of past difficulties and dangers. When (as at present) I possess plenty, I recall to mind the seasons when I was destitute of bread to eat, or a shirt to wear. And to sum up all, since I have been happy in a return of your affection, I often compare the state of my mind with what I was when I despaired of gaining it.

I have been lately looking back to the hour when I first saw you, and from thence through all the various turns I met with till you had the goodness to give me your hand and heart; and though you have abundantly made me amends for all my sufferings, I think nothing short of yourself could have satisfied me; and that, to the degree I loved you, I must have been miserable to the end of my life without you.

Do not think I consider you as the whole cause of my wretchedness; you were indeed the *occasion*, but the cause was wholly in myself. I gradually deviated from the principles in which I was educated, till I became profligate and abandoned; and the way of transgressors will always be hard. From this state God might indeed have appointed some other way for my recovery, though I had never known you; but to all human appearance *you* were the instrument of snatching me from ruin. And at last, if you had not been one of a thousand, to conduct the absolute influence you had over me with prudence and caution, we might both have been unhappy.

December 12, 1742, was the memorable day on the event of which my future life was to turn. I was then advancing towards eighteen, you were within a month of fourteen. How wonderful that, when we were both so young, an impression should be made upon my mind almost at first sight, which neither distance nor absence, nor all my sufferings, nor even all the licentiousness and folly I afterwards ran into could obliterate!

I knew not at first what ailed me. I was uneasy when you were absent, yet when you were present I scarcely durst look at you. If I attempted to speak, I trembled and was confused. My love made me stupid at first. I could not bear to leave you; but once and again broke my engagements, and disappointed my father's aim to settle me for life, rather than be banished far from you.

August 30.

In March, 1744, I was impressed, and sent in a tender on board the Harwich. Here I began a new stage of my life. Here I met with a shrewd man, who robbed me of my principles, and poisoned me with infidelity. Then *bad* soon became *worse*. I forsook God, and he left me, for a time, to follow the way of my own heart. I deserted from the ship at Plymouth, when sent upon duty, but was apprehended, brought back like a felon, degraded and punished, as I well deserved. Surely no misery could be greater than mine while I remained in that ship; but at Madeira I was exchanged and sent to Guinea. In that ship I might have done well, but I would not, and at length thought it eligible to quit her, and to reside on shore in Africa. Here falling sick, and being therefore useless, I incurred the displeasure and contempt of my black mistress, P. I. and soon became the scorn and the pity of slaves. Almost naked and famished, a burden to myself and to all around me, helpless and hopeless, I dragged through almost a year. My outward situation was *then* a little amended; and I thought myself fixed for life, when a message reached me in a most providential manner, inviting me to return to England. The invitation would have been in vain, had it not revived in my mind the possibility (had I considered maturely, it would hardly have amounted to a possibility) of obtaining you. This gleam of hope determined me. If I had not known you, perhaps I should never have seen the coast of Guinea. But it seems more certain, that if I had not known you, I should never have returned from it. Near a year (for so long I was on shipboard) I spent in dreadful wickedness: and I should have come to England as unworthy of you as ever, had it not pleased God to meet with me. Oh! I have reason to praise him for that storm; for the apprehension I had, first of sinking under the weight of all my sins into the ocean. and into eternity, and afterwards of being starved to death. Then I began to think; I attempted to pray, and my first half-formed prayers were answered. He whom the winds and seas obey, in a manner little less than miraculous, brought me in safety to Ireland.

September 2.

When I arrived at Liverpool, not meeting with a letter from your aunt, I thought myself forsaken by her. This added to the rest of the difficulties which I knew were in my way, made me despair of success; and as I was now become more considerate. I thought it best for us both to break off; accordingly I wrote to her, with a heavy heart, and with watery eyes, that I intended to give you no further trouble. But, upon the receipt of her answer, I was glad to change my mind; and I soon set off for London to see you. See you I did, but little more. I was tongue-tied, as formerly; when I had just feasted my eyes, I returned to Liverpool at almost as great an uncertainty as before; I cannot say quite, for I saw so much generosity in your behaviour, as encouraged me to hope on. And I ventured afterwards to put it to a final issue to yourself by letter. I believe, had you then given me an absolute refusal, I should have endeavoured to conquer, or at least, to smother my passion.

When I received your answer, I kept it some time before I durst open it. When I did, I was transported to find you kind—for though you wrote in the most cautious terms, I knew it was much in my favour that you would write at all, and that you designed I should understand it so. And I was sure you had too much honour and goodness to trifle with me, after I had stated the affair in so serious a light.

Then, my dearest M***, on that very day, I began to live indeed, and to act, in all my concerns, with a spirit and firmness to which I before was a stranger. My next voyage, though troublesome enough, yet, enlivened by the hopes you had given me, was to me light and easy. And as it pleased God to enable me, in some measure, to act up to my new resolutions, I was, for the most part, at peace every way. I informed you of my arrival at Liverpool, and, upon the receipt of your second dear letter, I set off to try once more what I could find to say for myself; and, as you were then disposed to make your company agreeable to me, I found it so indeed. Such are the outlines of my history, which I will close with thanking you for the invaluable present you made me, on the never-to-be-forgotten first of February, 1750. But I must request your patience while I draw an inference or two from it.

September 5.

And, first, from a frequent review of the past, I learn to be easy and thankful in my present situation. The dispensations of Di-

vine Providence towards me have surely been extraordinary. All the evil I suffered was the immediate result of my own folly and wilfulness; but the good I have experienced was wholly unmerited, and for a long time unhoped for. Had it pleased God to continue my life upon any terms, I ought to be very thankful for it, as allowing me time for repentance. But as though this were a small thing, my wild and roving behaviour has been over-ruled to procure me a better prospect in life, than perhaps I should have obtained by following my proper business from the first with a steady application. And further, as I have reason to think that riches, could I have acquired them, would have been tasteless to me without you, what sufficient acknowledgment can I make that even this last, best crowning gift, should be added to the rest! Could my wretched course of life, for several years that I pretended to have you so much at heart, entitle me to this blessing? Alas! I was unworthy of you, in every sense of the word.

Since, therefore, so many blessings were in store for me, though I had cast off all fear and thought of the great God; why should I fear, now that I endeavour to acknowledge him in all my ways? I entered upon this voyage with little anxiety, though I well knew it would expose me to many dangers, because I had been protected before, and brought through the like unhurt. I parted from you with grief, it is true, and yet with a degree of cheerfulness; because I trusted that he who brought us together so much beyond my expectations and deserts, would restore us to each other again at a proper time; and, for the same reason, my heart now exults in the hope that the time is nearly approaching. My cares are sweetened with many comforts, and my pleasures, when I meet them, I believe, are with as little alloy as can be expected in this sublunary state.

I infer, secondly, (which I have often mentioned before, but cannot too often repeat,) how great my obligations are to you. I will not compliment you as the first and principal cause, (for that I look higher,) but surely I may consider you as the chief mean and instrument of rescuing me from guilt and misery, and forming me to a true taste for the enjoyment of life. In gaining *you*, I gained all at once. The empty shows of pleasure, which daily ruin thousands, have no more charms for me; and the difficulties and troubles which are, more or less, inseparable from this mortal state, appear light and tolerable for your sake. The only study now left me (a pleasing study) is, how I may best deserve and requite your goodness. Good night. I am going to look at the north star.

September 6.

I MUST mention one additional circumstance, which demands my thankfulness. I mean the friendship and kindness of the whole family to which I am by you allied. Was it not very happy for me, that I should receive you from those very persons to whom, of all others, I had the greatest desire of being obliged? For I knew it would have been in vain to expect *your* consent, unless it was allowed and confirmed by theirs. By the bye, I should tell you that your unusual observance to your parents gave me some of my strongest hopes, that if we were once joined, we should do well together; for I thought it morally impossible, that the best daughter I had met with, should not prove a good wife. I have seen the peace of some hopeful marriages disturbed, and sometimes destroyed, by dissentions arising from the new relations; but I have seldom seen such entire disinterested harmony as subsists among us.

At Sea, September 9.

IT is now such weather as often makes those who live on shore pity the poor sailors. The wind blows very hard, the sea runs high, and tosses the ship about without any ceremony. So that writing is difficult, and I must be shorter than usual; but I was not willing to desist entirely. For my own part, I do not think my case very pitiable. I am in good health, I am surrounded by a good Providence, to which a calm and a storm are alike; and, as the wind is fair, every puff pushes me nearer to you. I have shortened the distance between us about one hundred and eighty miles within the last twenty-four hours. Who would not purchase this speed (if it could be bought) at the price of a little inconvenience? Not that I am anxiously in haste. I am willing to make the best use, both of fair and of contrary winds, and if possible, with equal thankfulness, for I trust all my concerns are under a better direction than my own, and that you and I shall meet again, in the best concerted hour and manner imaginable.

At Sea, September 16.

The scene is much changed since yesterday. The wind is abated, and the raging billows are greatly subsided. I thank God we did not sustain the least damage, though such seasons are not without real danger; for the force of the sea, when enraged by the wind, is inconceivable by those who have not seen it, and un-

manageable by those who have seen the most of it. God is often pleased to make this element his instrument of confounding the pride of those who presume to think their own art, vigilance, and precaution, a sufficient security against it; while at the same, or at a worse time, he makes the use of common means successful, to such as acknowledge that their best endeavours must be in vain without his blessing.

It is a common error to be much afraid in times of great apparent danger, and only at such seasons. In a tempest, a fire, a pestilence, or an earthquake, we are alarmed, and cry, Lord, help us, and give ourselves up for gone. But, alas! were our frail lives any way inconsistent with the views of Providence, there is no need of such a mighty apparatus to remove us. A fever, a fall, a fly, a tile, or even a hair, are, and have been, sufficient to interrupt the schemes of the ambitious, to rob the conqueror of his triumphs, or to change beauty into a loathsome mass.

These thoughts have arisen from a grateful sense of my late preservation, and there is a propriety in offering them to you. I owe to you the most that endears life to me. I ought to be thankful for its continuance, though it were not thus enlivened, as a state of improvement and preparation for a better: but for any happiness merely temporal, further than what shall be allotted me through and with you, I have neither conception nor desire. Further than this I dare not say. God forbid that either of us should mistake the mean, his goodness in blessing us with affections so happily attuned to each other, for the end to which it ought to lead us; so as to place an undue stress upon what must be either taken from us, or we from it. Since we are sure we must at length part, let us endeavour that it may be upon such terms as may afford us, mutually, the joyful hope of a re-union, when we shall no more be liable to separation or disappointment. This must be happiness indeed!

At Sea, September 19.

I AM a great admirer of Æsop's fables. They could hardly have been more adapted to the customs and humours of our times, had they been written in London. His apes, lions, foxes, geese, magpies, and monkeys, may be met in our streets every day. As a proof that I am not partial in my censure, I will confess that I myself have frequently appeared in some of these characters. When I first knew you, I was a bear; I then became an owl, and afterwards exhibited the worst properties of *all* these brutes in my single self.

The morals, so called, usually subjoined to the fables, I think

might be omitted without much loss. Let the reader moralize for himself, as I mean to do on a fable which commonly stands the first in the book. I must give it you from memory, and believe I shall not much deviate from the original:

"A cock, scraping in a dunghill, found a diamond. Oh! said he, what a fine bright thing is this! a jeweller would be overjoyed to find it; but, for my part, I think it a mere bawble, and, would prefer one barley-corn to all the diamonds and pearls in the world!" Is not this a lively picture of some who would be thought fine gentlemen! In taste, discernment, and employment, how nearly do they resemble the cock! Solomon assures us, the price of a virtuous woman is above rubies; which sufficiently explains what is meant by the diamond. Thus the libertine judges of a fine woman, every way qualified to make a man of sense happy. He will, like the cock, allow that she is worth much to the one who knows how to value her, (for beauty joined with goodness in a female character, will extort some homage from the most brutish.) I must own, he would say, she is very amiable; and, if a man should gain her who can relish the good sense, tenderness, and generosity she seems to possess, he would, to be sure, think himself very happy; but these things are to me mere bawbles. If I have my barley corn, I shall not envy him. My bottle and a brothel are more to my taste. Thus far my moral.

How is it that women, who profess a regard for honour, truth, and virtue, will, without scruple, converse in general terms with men who live in open defiance to these principles, if they are only recommended by a genteel address and appearance; and will permit them, upon the easy condition of avoiding gross, vulgar terms, to say things which they must surely despise? If they would resolutely treat with contempt the man who should dare to hint, that he considers all women as alike, it would prevent the ruin of many of your sex, and be the most effectual step towards a reformation amongst ours that I can think of. But now, let a wretch, by a complicated scene of perjury, baseness, and ingratitude, first ruin, and then abandon, a young creature who has been so unhappy as to believe him, he will probably be received in the next company with a smile, and marks of good will; while the poor dupe of his artifice, deprived both of peace and subsistence, shall be deemed unworthy of pity; and this from women who ought to be the patterns of commiseration and candour!

You, I know, think more justly. You do not suppose that your having withstood or escaped all villanous designs, can warrant you to add weight to the affliction of those who have been overreached. I may say of you, with the poet,

There dwelt the scorn of vice, and pity too.

I know not what I should digress to next, but I am just told the tea-kettle boils; so, as the sailors say, no more at present.

September 20.

We have another heavy gale of wind, and it is not easy to sit fast, or to hold a pen; but as the distance between us is lessening at the rate of seven or eight miles per hour, I am willing to fill up my paper as fast as I can. I wish I had words to convey some idea of the scene around me; but it cannot be fully described. A faint, and but a faint conception may be formed from pictures, or prints, of a storm at sea. Imagine to yourself an immense body of water behind you, higher than a house, and a chasm of equal depth just before you: both so apparently dangerous that you could hardly determine which to venture; and both so near, as not to allow you a moment's time to choose: for in the twinkling of an eye the ship descends into the pit which is gaping to receive her, and with equal swiftness ascends to the top on the other side, before the mountain that is behind can overtake her. And this is repeated as often as you can deliberately count four. It is indeed wonderful that a ship will run incessantly over these hills and dales for days and weeks together (if the gale lasts so long) without receiving the least damage, or taking any considerable quantity of water on board; and yet never be more than four or five yards from a sea which, if it was quite to reach her, would perhaps disable her beyond recovery, if not beat her to pieces at a single blow. Need we go further for the proof of a Providence always near, always kind, kind to the unthankful and the evil? For though these marks of his care are repeated every minute, they are seldom acknowledged by seamen. For my own part, I see dangers so numerous and imminent that I should be always in anxiety and fear, could I not submit myself and all my concerns to Him who holds the waves of the sea in the hollow of his hand, as the prophet strongly expresses it; so that when most enraged by the winds, I am sure they dare not rise a single inch beyond his permission.

You have often heard of an ostrich, and perhaps seen one. This bird is common in the northern parts of Africa; and, if travellers, may be believed, he has a peculiarity which, if my friend Æsop had known, he would, I think, have given him a place in his fables. They say, when an ostrich is pursued, he usually gets clear by running, if the place is open and plain; (for they are swifter than a horse;) but if he be near an enclosure or wood, he sticks his head into the first bush he can reach, and when he can no longer see his enemy, he thinks himself safe, and stands quiet till he is caught. We may smile at this folly in a bird, but

how often is it an emblem of our own! When the thing we fear is impending, and before our eyes, we are alarmed; but soon drop our apprehensions, and perhaps are unwilling to own we had any, when the danger is over, as we suppose; that is, when we cannot see it. Our own wisdom, or diligence, or vanity, serve us for a bush; and we little think of the many calamities to which we are equally exposed from other quarters; though we daily see more people suffering by what they slighted, than by what they feared. May you and I learn to fear the Lord, and we need fear none but him. He could preserve us safe and happy, though fire and air, earth and water, men and devils, were to conspire against our peace.

September 21.

How different is to-day from yesterday! The sea hardly seems to be the same element. The weather is quite fair, the wind moderate, but still favourable, and the water smooth. When the country is loaded with snow, and the trees without a leaf, how pleasing is the alteration produced by the returning spring! The ground, by degrees, is covered with flowers, the woods arrayed in green, and music is heard from every thicket. Seamen often experience as great a change in a few hours, which makes it the more sensible. A little bad weather, now and then, makes the return of fair more pleasant. I seem to-day to breathe a new air, and with a new life.

You are very kind to wish yourself at sea with me; but dearly as I value your company, I could not consent to pay such a price for it. I can easily submit to the inconveniences of a sea-faring life while you are safe on shore; but they would distress me greatly if you were affected by them. I am like a prudent merchant who, not willing to risk his whole fortune in one adventure, leaves the better and larger part of his riches at home; and then, if any thing happens, he can comfort himself with the thoughts of a reserve.

Excepting the pain of your absence, (which I hope I shall always feel when from you,) I have little to disquiet me. My condition when abroad, and even in Guinea, might be envied by multitudes who stay at home. I am as absolute in my small dominions (life and death excepted) as any potentate in Europe. If I say to one, Come, he comes; if to another, Go, he flies. If I order one person to do something, perhaps three or four will be ambitious of a share in the service. Not a man in the ship must eat his dinner till I please to give him leave: nay, nobody dares say, it is twelve or eight o'clock, in my hearing, till I think proper to say so first.

There is a mighty bustle of attendance when I leave the ship, and a strict watch kept while I am absent, lest I should return unawares, and not be received in due form. And should I stay out till mid-night, (which for that reason I never do without necessity,) nobody must presume to shut their eyes, till they have had the honour of seeing me again. I would have you judge, from my manner of relating these ceremonials, that I do not value them highly for their own sake; but they are old established customs, and necessary to be kept up; for, without a strict discipline, the common sailor would be unmanageable. But, in the midst of all my parade, I do not forget (I hope I never shall) what my situation was on board the Harwich, and at the Plantanes.

September 25.

While I am writing, the ship keeps running towards you. The wind has been mostly fair for more than a week. Sometimes I almost fancy myself in a dream, and think, Can it indeed be possible, that I am within a few weeks of so much happiness as a return to you includes? Perhaps I may find you ill—perhaps I may not reach you at all, near as I think myself. Hundreds have perished much nearer home. But all dark thoughts give way to my dependence upon God. I know I do not deserve so great a blessing as to be restored to you again; but neither did I deserve to be blessed with you at first. I hope, arrive when I will, I shall bring home a disposition to be thankful. I have advanced about eight hundred miles this week. How many deaths and dangers have I escaped in that space! Why then should I fear these that are still before me, if I am always under the same protection?

At Sea, September 26.

The weather is at present very cold, wet, and windy; but, I thank God, my heart is warm and calm. I think of past times, when I have been happy with you, and I count nothing a hardship that does not interfere with my hope of being so again. I would not wish to fix the hour myself, because I cannot choose for the best. I suppose myself about three hundred and fifty miles from Ireland, and I have at times been too impatient to see it, because I should be so much nearer to you. But were we now very close to the land, I might perhaps wish myself far out at sea again; for the wind, in its present degree and direction, which is

only inconvenient here, would there be dangerous. How often have I found, that the accomplishment of my own short-sighted designs would have been to my hurt! And yet, alas! I feel it difficult to submit my concerns to a superior management, though I am convinced, in my judgment, that I could not order them so well myself. The story of the Fairy who would never assign a reason for what she did, but always did right, though some of her proceedings appeared to contradict her promises, I think well suited to illustrate the conduct of Divine Providence, which will surely do us good, if we can humbly trust it, without nicely examining the aptness of the means by which it works. Dr. Parnell's Hermit is a still more solid and satisfying illustration of this subject. How miserable, for instance, must both you and I have been, if my desire had succeeded before I had a little learnt how to treat and value you? And how unlikely was the path that I trod for several years, to lead me to your possession? And though I should have thought myself happy, could I have avoided the necessity of leaving you for the long term of this voyage, yet I am assured, that when we are permitted to meet, we shall both derive advantages from the separation.

The ship has so many motions, that writing (unless to you) would be quite troublesome. So I shall leave off, though I cannot say the tea-kettle boils, nor am I sure that it will, for the sea often puts the fire out. But if you drink your tea in peace, I can make a good shift without any.

At Sea, October 2.

I HAVE been prevented from writing in the day, so must try my eyes by candle-light. Indeed, at present, I could not write with pleasure to any one but yourself; for, as I expect every hour to see the land, my head is full of the charge of a ship valuably laden, and the lives of many people intrusted to my care. Not that I have more anxiety than is needful to make me use my best endeavours. For the success of the whole, I can with some comfort depend on the good providence of God; but I must not presume to be preserved by a miracle. It is sufficient if my best diligence is permitted to answer the proposed end; which, of itself, I am sure it cannot do. The innumerable possibilities of miscarriage to which a ship is liable, are far beyond the reach of human foresight or prevention. It is my mercy to be convinced of this, and, at the same time, to be able to look higher for protection.

When Cæsar was once at sea in a storm, and the mariners themselves were startled at the danger, he is reported to have said,

"Fear nothing, you carry Cæsar and his fortune." Perhaps I may, with less presumption than he, take some comfort in the thought of my own importance; for though, strictly speaking, I am a mere nothing, I hope I may rank myself with those to whom all things are promised to work together for good, and that my best interests are fixed upon a foundation that cannot be shaken. When I do give way to fears or wishes of a temporal kind, I think it is chiefly on your account. I would be thankful for life, but am in some measure freed from the dread of death, further than for the grief it would occasion to you. I ought to strive to get the better of this thought likewise; but I have not yet attained. In the wretched, unthinking part of my life, I was full of fears, which I do not now wonder at. The wonder is, how any one who lives as I then did, can be otherwise. Surely the sudden and various passages from this world to the next, must shock those who have nothing to hope for, but every thing to fear, by the change. The wicked flee when no man pursueth; the shadow of danger discomposes them; and whatever boasts they may make of their courage, it most commonly fails them when most needed, unless they have hardened themselves beyond the power of reflection. But the righteous are bold as a lion. No difficulty can overpower their resolution when they are in the path of duty.

Were some gay ladies of your acquaintance to read what I write, they would call much of it stuff, and preaching; and admire that you have patience to read it. Perhaps a time will come, when such will wish they had thought as you do. However, I do not write in this serious strain for your perusal only, but for my own; to quicken my remembrance of the past, when I shall be restored to you, and be in a state of more apparent safety; in hopes that these passages may contribute to the forming of my behaviour *then*, answerably to my deliberate and cool judgment of things *now;* that I may not be like the sailor who once, in great distress, made a vow to the Virgin Mary, that if she would deliver him, he would present her with a wax candle as big as the ship's mainmast; and on being asked how he would raise money, to pay for so large a candle, he said, "Let us first get on shore, and then the saints will not exact too strictly upon a sailor's promise."

At Sea, October 3.

WHAT a tasteless, unpleasant voyage would this have been, if you had not secured my happiness before I came out, and given me something to remember, and something to hope for, that has

supported me at all times; and yet you denied me at first with so grave a face, and had such absolute command over me, that I had almost taken you at your word. I may be obliged to Mrs. H.'s advice, that I did not fairly give up my suit; though, upon second thoughts, I believe it was more owing to my opinion of your generosity. For I thought, that to send me away empty again, would argue a selfish caution, of which I could not suppose you capable, without wronging you. So I ventured to touch again upon a subject on which you positively enjoined me silence. And I remember you forbade me again, but I thought you did not speak in so peremptory a manner as before. In a little time you heard me without interrupting me, and from thence proceeded to argue and object, in a cool, conversible strain. When it came to this, I promised myself success. I remembered that line,

The woman that deliberates is *gain'd*.

I then began to press my point more closely, till you actually yielded, and gave me your hand in consent; which, though I had been so long entreating for, I could not receive without trembling and surprise. I could hardly think myself awake. I never till then was sensible of the force of my love; and I slept that night with a content and sweetness which I had not known before. I often recollect these circumstances, and the much ado I made about you before marriage, to make me careful that my behaviour now may be suitable to my former professions. But, I thank God, it does not require much care or pains; for to do all in my power to please and oblige you, seems as natural to me as it is to breathe.

Liverpool, October 8.

THE news of my arrival will make this letter, however faulty, welcome to you. I could not write, at present, to any one but yourself. I am over-fatigued, having been incessantly walking for four days and four nights, which once brought on a temporary delirium, though not so violent as to prevent my knowing what I said or did. But almost every thing I thought of (yourself excepted) seemed to be present before my eyes. But since I came here I have had a good nap, which has much refreshed me, and I hope to be quite recovered to-morrow. In other respects I am in perfect health.

I hope to set out for London as soon as the ship is discharged; but cannot be yet sure. Should another voyage be proposed im-

mediately, I must beg you to submit to the inconvenience of a long journey in the winter; for, now there is no ocean between us, we must not be separated, no, not for a single hour, without necessity. But I rather hope and expect the lot of travelling will fall to me.

I hope you will rather be pleased with the knowledge of my being now so near you, than be grieved that we must wait a little longer before we meet. For my own part, I have so strong an impression of the dangers I have mercifully escaped in the course of the last week, that I dare not complain of a little delay; and when the post shall bring me an assurance of your health and peace, I shall cheerfully wait the ordinary course of things.

Liverpool, October 11.

In about fourteen days from this date I hope to be preparing for London. Mr. M**** says, that about March I may expect to be summoned again; and then he hopes to see you with me, and that he will be glad to make his house an agreeable home to you, and charge himself with the care of returning you to London, if you do not choose to reside in Liverpool while I am abroad. Mrs. M**** likewise wishes to see you. She thinks she pays my judgment a compliment, in forming a favourable idea of you beforehand. I smile, and say nothing. She will perceive, when the time comes, that any opinion of you derived only from the knowledge of what I am, must greatly wrong you.

Many welcome me home; but, alas! Liverpool without you, is almost as poor a home to me as the wildest part of Africa. I only say almost, because I am much in Mr. M****'s family, and when there, find some alleviation of your absence. All the rest is wearisome and tedious. I enjoy myself best when retired in my room, and especially when I am writing to you.

Liverpool, October 13.

If I could write a quire, I should be unable to express my pleasure on the receipt of your dear, punctual favour of the 9th. It is like your kindness, to offer to meet me upon the road, but I beg you to spare yourself the trouble. I do not even desire you to come to London, as I have no business to detain me there, and I should be under some restraint at the house of an acquaintance. The pleasure of having our first interview quite at home, amongst ourselves, seems worth waiting for a few hours. I am glad you

made yourself quite easy upon the news of my departure from Antigua. But now I am safely arrived, I may venture to tell you, that my passage homewards at this time of the year (the hurricane season) was the most apparently dangerous part of the voyage: I thought it so before I sailed; yet I ventured to foretell a happy arrival; because I trusted to that Providence which has never failed me. In effect, all proved favourable; and, excepting two or three hard gales, I might, for the most part of the way have come safely in a Gravesend boat.

Liverpool, October 18.

I HAVE been searching (in vain) for epithets and phrases, but I must stop.——They say the Greek is a more expressive language than our own; if so I wish we both understood it, for it is impossible for mere English to do justice to a twentieth part of what I have in my mind. Yet I ought not to quarrel with words, lest my actions, however well meant, should fall equally short of what I owe you. But I know you will kindly value them according to my intention, which I am sure is strong and sincere, to make you every return in my power. I hope soon to name the day of my leaving Liverpool, and shall mind your caution about my health.

SECOND VOYAGE TO AFRICA.

1752.

At Sea, June 30.

I BEGIN to write the moment we are under sail, and shall snatch every interval while my friends stay with me.

The first thing I shall say is, that I am really easy. Though I have no relish for mirth, my mind is at peace. The knowledge of your love, the recollection of the happy time I have passed with you, and the powerful considerations of a more serious kind, which I have often repeated to you, have all the effect upon me that you could wish. And I assure you the resolution you have shown has no small influence, both as an example, and in giving me hope that you will strive to be composed, and to depend, with me, upon the good Providence which has already done so much for us. I do not complain of being something moved at parting; because I should be a wretch indeed, were I insensible of the value of what I leave behind. I can, from experience, pronounce, that the pains of an affection properly directed, are in no degree proportionable to its pleasures. I already look forward to a time when —— but I have no words to express myself, so must refer you to our last meeting on the second of November. Such another interview will be a full amends for the disagreeableness of a long voyage. May the good and gracious God bless and preserve you. Remember my last advice. Be patient and thankful, and expect me, at the best time, to return and be happy with you again.

At Sea, July 11.

THOUGH my letter by the pilot-boat went twelve days ago, I have not written to you since. We were exercised for some time, while near the land, with very thick weather, and westerly winds; and I would not begin my sea-correspondence till I could tell you (as I thank God I now can) that we are safely in good sea-room. I am almost ashamed to say how easily I bear your absence. Surely it is not that I love you less than formerly; yet I seem to myself, to make a better shift without you than I ought. Though I think of you continually, and pray for you almost hourly, much oftener than ever, my love and care for you are much freed from inquietude and anxiety. I have my serious hours; for

it is only from serious thoughts, at some times, that I can derive considerations sufficient to make me cheerful at any time.

I am now settled in a regular course; for so far as circumstances will permit, I do every thing by rule, and at a fixed hour. My time is divided into seasons for devotion, study, exercise, and rest; and, thus diversified, no part of it is tedious.

I have been following you, in my mind, to London this week; where I hope you arrived in safety last night; but, lest I should be mistaken in the time, I propose to travel it over again next week. I have almost dismissed my fears upon your account, for I have so often recommended and resigned you to the protection of God, that I seldom doubt of his special care over you. But I have bound myself in a strict promise, and engaged to use my whole interest with you to join me in it, that when he shall be pleased to bring us together again in peace, we will both endeavour to show gratitude by our conduct, as well as to express it in words. In the mean while, it is one of my daily and nightly petitions, that he may teach us to extract a real good out of these our painful separations, by improving the occasion to the increasing, and fixing, our best affections, on himself. From his favour and goodness, all our blessings, even our mutual love, proceeds. He is able and willing to prosper all our wishes and desires, so far as they are rightly grounded; and from this notice, neither time nor distance can separate us. He is an ever-present and an all-sufficient helper.

At Sea, July 24.

I KNOW you have thought of me to-day; because it is my birth-day. I have likewise observed it; but not so properly celebrated, as solemnized it. I would willingly grow wiser and better, as I grow older, every year. I have now lived twenty-seven years, but how few things have I done really worthy of life! unless I am allowed to consider the instances in which I have endeavoured to show my affection and gratitude to you of that number. I have some hope that my remaining time will be better improved; and my prayer and wish for you is, that we may be both of one mind, and prove helps to each other in our most important business; and this will be the most effectual means of securing peace and satisfaction in our inferior concernments. I continue to conceive most of my prayers in the plural number, as when we were together; for every desirable good that I can ask for myself, I am equally solicitous that you should be a sharer in.

At Sea, July 27.

I HAD nearly missed my post to-night, by attending to our old sea form in crossing the tropic. This is the boundary of what the ancients called the torrid zone. We crossed the supposed line of this boundary to-day. On these occasions, all the people on board a ship who have not passed it before, are subject to a fine, which, if they refuse to pay, or cannot procure, they must be ducked; that is, hoisted up by a rope to the yard-arm, and from thence dropped souse into the water. This is such fine sport to the seamen, that they would rather lose some of the forfeiture (which is usually paid in brandy) than that every body should escape the ducking. And in many vessels, they single out some poor helpless boy or landsman, to be half drowned for the diversion of his shipmates. But as I do not choose to permit any arbitrary or oppressive laws to be valid in my peaceful kingdom, I always pay for those who cannot pay for themselves. If this poor relation does not entertain you, the thought that I wrote it, and the persuasion that my inclination to send you something better is not wanting, will, I doubt not, make you some amends.

Indeed, I am at a loss for a subject. Suppose, for want of something better, I should observe, that it is a month since we parted. No, that will not do—the word *parted* has spoiled all. Oh! that morning! It was a parting indeed! but do not think I am uneasy at the recollection. I only gave way to one tender sigh, and now it is gone. Well, suppose, we turn the glass, and look forward to our next hoped-for happy meeting? Aye, that is the very thing; at the mention of it, I almost forget that we parted at all. Such a meeting as our last! Well, I am content, and acknowledge that one of those hours will make amends for all. Till that time shall come, all that we have to do is cheerfully to fill up the part Providence has appointed us, without too anxious solicitude; to pray for each other's welfare, and to endeavour to live under the impression of the blessings we have already received, or have yet to hope for, from our all gracious Benefactor; and all the rest will in due time come round, and you will find my dependence upon his goodness to be well founded.

At Sea, August 7.

I HAVE no confidant now, as I had in my poor doctor last voyage, to whom I can ease my mind a little, by talking of you. For my chief mate, though in all other respects much to my satisfaction, has not that turn of temper which is requisite to relish

the delicacy of the love I bear you; and to those who have not something of a fellow-feeling, my tenderness would appear only a kind of innocent folly. In this, you have greatly the advantage of me; you have friends about you, who will often speak of me, because they know it will please you. I would rather have your name so sounded in *my* ears, than to have Corelli himself entertain me with his own music. For want of this, I am forced to have recourse to my old custom of repeating it softly to myself, praying, at the same time, that the happiness I have in you, may be repaid you a thousand fold.

So that when I indulge myself with a particular thought of you, it usually carries me on further, and brings me upon my knees to bless the Lord for giving me such a treasure, and to pray for your peace and welfare. I cannot express the pleasure and satisfaction I find in these exercises. When thus engaged, my fears subside, my impatience of your absence changes into a resignation full of hope, and every anxious, uneasy thought is lulled to rest. This is my present temper, nor would I waste a wish for any thing the world can afford, beyond the probabilities which lie before me.

At Sea, August 11.

I NEED not apologize to you for writing so much in a serious strain; but were an excuse needful, I must plead *yourself*. For when I take up my pen, and begin to consider what I shall say, I am led to think of the goodness of God, who has made you mine, and given me a heart to value you. Thus my love to you, and my gratitude to him, cannot be separated. And as you are so good as to prize my affection, by finding it thus accompanied, you may be assured of its being unalterable. All other love, that is not thus connected with a dependence upon God, must be precarious. To this want I attribute many unhappy marriages. I believe many persons fall from their hopes of satisfaction in that state, by degrees insensible to themselves; and a secret change, or alienation of mind from each other, takes place before they are well aware of it; till, in time, they proceed to such lengths as they would once have judged impossible.

I am not at a loss to account for this. God has subjected the present state of the world to uncertainty and vanity; not because he is a hard master, but because he sees, if we go on smoothly long, we are prone to forget that our great concern in this life should be to prepare for another. Now they who, by his grace, are led to consider the great truths of religion, and are taught, before the days of trial come, to submit themselves, their designs,

and enjoyments, to his wisdom and guidance, may, in a great measure, escape the bitterness of evil, or, at least, the most bitter of those evils to which mortality is subject; because the merciful design of affliction is, to them, so far answered. But they who judge so ill as to place a dependence upon each other, which interferes with what they owe to their common Preserver, oblige him, if I may so speak, to quash their purpose, either by sickness, sufferings, death, or what to me seems worse than all, a change of affection, to make them feel their offence in their punishment. I dare not say that you and I have not been guilty of this error. But since it has pleased God, as yet, to forbear afflicting us for it, I hope, for the future, we shall be more upon our guard, and not further displease him.

Sierra Leone, August 17.

We arrived here the 17th, after a fine, and not very long, passage. We had no violent weather, nor painful event, but a visible hand of conducting Providence attended us all the day. I have begun trade, and things appear in a promising train.

I often ask myself if I know any person upon earth with whom I could be content, in all points, to change: and I can confidently answer, No: for the knowledge and enjoyment of your love enable me to look with pity upon kings, and I would not part with what I now feel upon your account, for the treasures of both the Indies.

October 6.

The Hunter, which will sail in a few days, has a large packet for you; and I have further sent you a few lines by Mr. D****, a young gentleman from Scotland, who is on board her. He has promised to deliver my letter in person, though he has no business at C**** but to oblige me by seeing you, that he may answer any little questions you may ask, or inform you of some incidents which I may have omitted. It is not easy to say, what pleasure I could take in conversing with any person who had lately been with you; and I judge of you by myself. In other respects he is an agreeable man, and I have been much pleased with him. I am informed he has a tolerable estate in Scotland; but having an eager desire of seeing new things, after having made the tour of France, he thought there might be something worthy of his notice

even in Guinea. But I believe his expectations have been much baulked.

It is now the noon of night, as Shakspeare somewhere expresses it. I left Sierra Leone this morning. I am sleepy, but must not go to bed yet, being often obliged to watch when the ship is under sail. This I submit to cheerfully, because you have, beforehand, overpaid me for my trouble. I have been praying for your calm repose, and am pleased with the hope that only one of us is kept waking. I pity those who have only dull interests to animate them in their business; and am surprised to see how powerful an inducement this is to them who have not a better. But I believe love would support me through more, and with more alacrity, than their plodding motive. When I am wearied or perplexed with any affair, I have only to reflect that I am employed upon your account, and that I may look for my reward from you, when I have done my work, or rather, that you rewarded me before I undertook it, and all difficulties presently disappear.

Shebar, October 31.

Since my last I have been a week on shore, and three or four days indisposed; but am now, I thank God, quite recovered. Your letter of the 12th of July came very seasonably, to comfort me in my illness. When you assure me that you are easy, I seem to have nothing to make me otherwise.

I have been sitting very gravely with my pen in my hand for some minutes, waiting for a thought to begin with; but with so little success, that, were it not to you, I should lay the paper aside till I was in a better cue. But to you something must be said. I have rung so many changes upon love and gratitude, upon the pains of separation, and the over balancing pleasures of meeting, that though I cannot be weary of the subjects, I begin to be weary of my way of treating them. But then, where shall I find other subjects worthy either of your attention or my own?

Were I to muster up my learning, and tell you what Plato or Cicero said, and upon what occasion they said it, I should think the paper might have been filled more acceptably to you by a speech of my own. Were I to send you a sample of philosophy, you might justly say, "This is but a cold business." Shall I then try to be witty? Alas! one tender thought, one sigh that terminates in your dear name, would spoil my conceit. I can think but of one subject more, and that perhaps I have already overdone likewise, unless I could do it better. But perform well or ill, you have little to expect from me but either love-letters or ser-

mons. In all other topics I feel a vanity and unimportance, which disgusts me when I am writing to you. But I cannot be soon weary of reminding you and myself of our obligations to the Author of all good, for our distinguished lot. May a grateful sense of his mercies be mutual! May it engage us in such a course, that death itself may not separate us long; but that we may have a well-grounded hope of meeting in a state, when the recollection of our highest endearments while here, which are surely the highest pleasure this world can afford, shall, by our own confession, be but a small thing compared with the abounding joys to which we shall then be admitted; and when we may have reason, through eternal ages, to bless the divine providential hand that first brought us together.

November 10.

I HAVE been walking the deck very pleasantly. It is my watch, for the ship is under sail. These silent night hours, when the weather is fair, are, to me, the most agreeable part of the voyage: for in the day-time, the heat of the sun, the smoke of the furnace, and the hurry of trade, are a little troublesome; I mean they would be so, did not the thoughts of you interpose to enliven the scene. But when the sun is set, the fires out, and all but the watch are asleep, I can enjoy myself without disturbance. I have a set of favourite themes to muse upon, which are always at hand, and cannot be easily exhausted. Sometimes I ruminate upon what is past; at others, anticipate what I hope is to come. And sometimes I look round me and reflect how God has been pleased to distinguish me, in his providence, not only from the crowds, whose miseries and sufferings are obvious, but even from the most of those who suppose themselves, and would persuade others, that they are happy. But so scanty are the general notions of earthly happiness, compared with mine, that I doubt not there are thousands in possession of great outward advantages, who yet, in their brightest intervals, never felt half of the satisfaction which at this moment warms my heart; though now it is a time of trial and exercise with me, being removed a third of the globe from the only treasure I have, or wish for, upon the surface of it.

It is now a twelvemonth since we met, after the long absence of my last voyage. The recollection of that hour gives me a pleasure which neither time nor distance can impair. And when I reflect, that I may hope, by the blessing of God, to be favoured with such another, I can smile at all the little incidental difficulties that may stand between us. Not that I have reason to think so

highly of that one particular day; it has only the merit of being an introduction to the many which followed. For when I am with you, I know little difference of days, except between the first and the last. These are very different indeed!

Cape Mount, November 20.

It has been out of my power to write of late. A part of the time I was on shore; and the rest, indispensably engaged. But my prayers, and warmest affection for you, have found a place in every waking hour. I have made no great progress in trade as yet, but as I am in good health, and mercifully preserved from heavy troubles, I am content and thankful; and doubt not of doing well at last, by the blessing of Him who has been with me hitherto. Were I master of the whole coast of Africa, I would part with it to procure you the same ground and degree of peace which I possess myself; and I am willing to hope that you are, by this time, not far, if at all, behind me; for if you seek it in the path I recommend to you, I am as sure you will find it as I am that it is to be found no where else. Were I to confine my thoughts to the dark side of human life, and reckon up, not only the evils attendant on my present situation, but the numberless calamities to which the smoothest state on this side the grave is exposed, I should be always in fear, both for you and for myself. But when I consider that the Most High is on our side, that he is all-sufficient—that we have already had innumerable proofs of his goodness to us—and that his promise runs, To him that hath, shall be given—then every disagreeable prospect vanishes.

Mana, December 1.

This day has been devoted to serious thoughts. I have had Mr. T**** on board with me a month; which, in one respect, was no small inconvenience, by breaking in upon my usual times of retirement. As I expected this would be a day of leisure, I resolved last night, to dedicate it to Him to whom I owe my all. I find, by repeated experience, that it is impossible to serve him for nought. I who was yesterday fluctuating and unsettled, am now composed and happy. It is a pleasure to me that, in consistence with my plan, I can let you have your hour too; and write a letter, which you will accept, in a religious strain.

I spent the forenoon chiefly in a review of the various mercies I have received, the long list of my deliverances, enjoyments, and comforts.—The afternoon was employed in making known my

requests, and submitting my views, designs, and hopes, to the disposal of my heavenly Father, whose wisdom and goodness are, I trust, engaged for me. In these exercises—oh! how I remember you! My first acknowledgments are for your love, and that you are mine, when I attempt to enumerate the blessings pertaining to this life; and my first desire is for a heart to value them. My prayers for you are, for your health, peace, and satisfaction, while we are separated, and for our happy meeting; but, above all, for your progress in religion, and that you may have a prospect of happiness, independent of all earthly comforts, and superior to them. So disinterested is my love, that I often earnestly pray you may, by grace, be prevented from making too much account of any thing on this side the grave, not excepting myself. For though I value your affection beyond crowns and empires, I tremble at the thought of being over regarded, or that you should wholly rest your peace upon such a wretched, feeble prop as I am. A love with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, (such, I fear, ours has too much been to each other,) can be only due to our Maker and great Benefactor. I mention this, because I have found it hard to distinguish in this matter. A long time it was before I durst appeal to my conscience, that I did not behold you with a regard which belongs only to God. And even to this day, I fear my heart deceives me. But I am endeavouring to avoid this error, no less for your sake than for my own; lest I should provoke him to wound me in the most sensible part, and to afflict you, for my punishment.

I hope you will not misunderstand me, as if I thought I loved you, or could love you, too much, (that one necessary exception only excepted.) You may be assured that my love (especially when thus limited) is incapable of change, and always upon the increase. Whatever may be expected on my side, from a temper naturally susceptive of tenderness, and from the many inexpressible endearments and obligations I have received from you, none of which are lost or forgotten by me, I feel at this moment, and trust I shall always feel, while I can subscribe myself

Yours, &c.

Cape Mount, December 25.

I NOW sit down to wish you a happy Christmas; a merry one is a frequent phrase, but that falls far short of my desire. For I have often found mirth and happiness to be two very different things; and that either of them, when prevalent in a great degree, is inconsistent with the other. My heart is warm with the recollection of many endeared hours passed with you, when my happi-

ness has been, for the time, complete, and yet I have not then felt the least inclination to be merry; and I have often been forced into a laugh, when I have not been pleased.

This has been a serious day with me; and, after what I have written already, I need not attempt to say how much you have been concerned in it. It grieves me to think that this is usually a season of festivity and dissipation. Surely they who think proper to notice it at all, should show their attention in a different manner. If we are really Christians, and do indeed believe the tenour of the Scriptures, with what serious thankfulness, and joyful composure, ought we to commemorate the coming of a Saviour into the world? If the little good offices we perform to each other demand a grateful return, what do we owe to Him, who, of his own free motion and goodness, humbled himself so far, and suffered so much, to redeem us from extreme and endless misery? Oh! my dearest M***, it is a most certain truth, that if he had not pitied us, we must have been for ever wretched. And if we continue to neglect him now, our misery will be aggravated by the refusal of the sure and only mean of relief. And, however a round and series of what the world miscalls pleasure, may stifle uneasy thoughts for a time, they will at length awake, to the confusion of all who despise this mercy, and die impenitent. My subject has almost made me forget I am writing to you. For, blessed be God! I hope we are not like them. I trust we both desire to be wise in time, and to apply to the Giver of all grace, for that sufficiency which of ourselves we cannot attain. And if we ask, we undoubtedly shall succeed. This hope fills my mouth with praise, since I now see a plain and secure path to eternal happiness, not for myself only, but for you likewise, whose welfare, if I mistake not, is little less dear to me than that of my own soul. I find, as Solomon says, that love is stronger than death: for my regard for you often leads my views beyond the grave, and alleviates the thought, that we must sooner or later be separated here, with the prospect of being joined hereafter, upon much preferable terms; where our love will be refined and ennobled, and the consciousness of our being mutually and for ever happy, will fill us with a joy of which we have no present conception; and yet, perhaps, this joy will be among the least in that happy state.

1753.

Mana, January 12.

Were it not for the late alteration of the style, this would be new-year's day. It is with a pleasing kind of regret I remember

how happily I began the last year, and how happy I continued for just six months afterwards. The latter half of the year has been of a different colour; for though I have, even now, much to be thankful for, I am absent from you. A seafaring life has its peculiar trials and difficulties, and the Guinea trade, perhaps, has more than any other. But if I must be detained from you for a season, I am as well here as elsewhere; for to live without you, constitutes the very essence of Guinea to me, so far as the word expresses a disagreeable situation; and I hope and believe I should find myself as much at a loss, and sigh as often for something better, if I lived in the palace of Versailles, and could call it my own, unles you were with me. But when I direct my thoughts forward, to the prospect of being restored to you again, the scene changes at once, and I seem to be at Versailles already.

It may be said that my hopes are precarious, and may be disappointed. But here religion comes to my aid, and tells me that my best interest, though apparently contingent, is in effect firm as a rock; being supported by Him whose wisdom, power, and goodness are infinite; who cannot but be present with me in all difficulties and dangers; who knows our weaknesses and our wants, and has promised to relieve and supply them. My own experience has convinced me a thousand times, that his promise is sure. Here is my refuge and comfort. Every other expedient would fail me in some tender hours, when I think of home; but in the trust I have just mentioned I find repose when, seemingly, most destitute and forlorn. My prayers are frequent, that you, like me, may always derive comfort from the same considerations.

Mana, January 26.

THOUGH to be absent from you is the chief part of my trial, it is not the whole. In this unhappy country, I am in the midst of scenes, not only inferior, but opposite to those which are inseparable from your company. But from being much among a people who are so far from possessing such mercies as I am favoured with, that they are unable to form a conception of them, I may learn a lesson of gratitude; since the least pleasing part of my life is such, as still to leave me room to pity millions of my fellow-creatures. The three greatest blessings of which human nature is capable, are undoubtedly religion, liberty, and love. In each of these, how highly has God distinguished me! But here are whole nations around me, whose languages are entirely different from each other, yet I believe they all agree in this, that they

have no words among them expressive of these engaging ideas: from whence I infer, that the ideas themselves have no place in their minds. And as there is no medium between light and darkness, these poor creatures are not only strangers to the advantages which I enjoy, but are plunged in all the contrary evils. Instead of the present blessings, and bright future prospects of Christianity, they are deceived and harrassed by necromancy, magic, and all the train of superstitions that fear, combined with ignorance, can produce in the human mind. The only liberty of which they have any notion, is an exemption from being sold; and even from this, very few are perfectly secure that it shall not, some time or other, be their lot; for it often happens, that the man who sells another on board a ship, is himself bought and sold, in the same manner, and perhaps in the same vessel, before the week is ended.* As for love, there may be some softer souls among them than I have met with, but for the most part, when I have tried to explain this delightful word, I have seldom been in the least understood; and when I have spoken of its effects I have never been believed. To tell them of the inexpressible and peculiar attraction between kindred minds; the pains of absence, the pleasures of a re-meeting, (if I may make a word,) and all the other endearments (were it lawful, or possible, to name them,) which I owe to you, would be labour lost; like describing the rainbow to a man born blind. What needs all this ado? they have said, Will not one woman cut wood and fetch water, as well as another? Their passions are strong; but few, indeed, have any notion of

* The reader may perhaps wonder, as I now do myself, that knowing the state of the vile traffic to be as I have here described, and abounding with enormities which I have not mentioned, I did not, at the time, start with horror at my own employment, as an agent in promoting it. Custom, example, and interest, had blinded my eyes. I did it ignorantly; for, I am sure, had I thought of the slave-trade then, as I have thought of it since, no considerations would have induced me to continue in it. Though my religious views were not very clear, my conscience was very tender, and I durst not have displeased God by acting against the light of my mind. Indeed, a slave-ship, while upon the coast, is exposed to such innumerable and continual dangers, that I was often then, and still am, astonished that any one, much more so many, should leave the coast in safety. I was then favoured with an uncommon degree of dependence upon the providence of God, which supported me; but this confidence must have failed in a moment, and I would have been overwhelmed with distress and terror, if I had known, or even suspected, that I was acting wrong. I felt the disagreeableness of the business very strongly. The office of a gaoler, and the restraints under which I was forced to keep my prisioners, were not suitable to my feelings; but I considered it as the line of life which God, in his providence, had allotted me; and as a cross which I ought to bear with patience and thankfulness, till he should be pleased to deliver me from it. Till then I only thought myself bound to treat the slaves under my care with gentleness, and to consult their ease and convenience, as far as was consistent with the safety of the whole family of whites and blacks on board my ship.

what I mean by tenderness. While I am writing, many past circumstances occur to my memory, and my heart swells at the odious comparison I have unawares made.

I have heard England styled the paradise of women; but surely, in this respect, it is no less the paradise of men likewise: for there, perhaps they best understand the means of their own happiness, and of how much importance it is to form a right judgment of the dignity and value of your sex; which, whoever attains, thereby indicates that he possesses some degree of dignity in himself. In saying this, to be sure, I sound my own praise, but you will excuse me.

Shebar, March 5.

It is often remarked, that advice is more easily given than followed. I have of late, and perhaps sometimes too officiously, taken occasion to prescribe patience, when I have seen people uneasy under a scene of what we call disappointments, and want of success. Providence seems at length to put me to the trial, how far the arguments I have used with others will have influence upon myself. I have been now near seven months upon the coast, and am yet unable to judge when I shall probably leave it, and must expect to make a loosing voyage at last. I should not write so frankly, but that I hope to be in a better place, and upon a greater certainty before I send my letter home. But I am willing to give you my present thoughts, that you may judge, once for all, how I am supported when things do not answer my wishes.

The interest of my employers, and my long confinement from you, are two points to which I cannot be indifferent. I hope I never shall, for then I must be ungrateful or insensible, either of which appears more terrible to me than any outward evils. But then my concern ought to be no more than is necessary to excite me to make the most of what lies before me. As I cannot charge myself with neglect, or any considerable false step, though I am sorry to be the occasion of loss to my friends, the thought should not break my peace, if I am conscious of having done my best.

As to what concerns myself; how far two unsuccessful voyages may affect my interest, or diminish my expected profits, I am tolerably easy. I have placed my dependence higher: I consider my friends and employers as instruments in the hand of God for my good. He can continue them to me, or raise me up better with equal ease. As to money, you know my thoughts of it. In itself, and as an end, it is of no value; but of use, as a mean of procuring the conveniences of life: and therefore I am

willing to embrace any honourable terms for procuring a competency: but still, without solicitude, I have enough for the present; and the promise of God warrants me to hope for what he sees needful for me in time to come.

In this manner I reason against my first grievance, which is neither so pressing, nor so constantly upon my mind as the other —my long separation from you. Money matters affect me but occasionally, and I can relieve myself by employments or amusements; but your idea is before me at all times and in all places. You are with me in retirement, and go with me into company: neither business nor relaxation, neither hurry nor indolence, can hide you from my thoughts. Every thing I see, equally reminds me that you are absent; and now the season is drawing near when we hoped to meet; and yet to be still deferred. However, against this uneasiness I have some remedies, which never wholly fail me. I have often repeated them to you: I think of your love, and that I am here for your sake. I recollect the past, I anticipate the future, and am satisfied. I consider likewise the benefits I am favoured with even now; my health, my preservation, and protection, while surrounded with impending dangers, whether on ship-board or on shore; and when I join to these the thought of my own unworthiness, and small improvement of my mercies, and my blindness and inability to choose (was it even permitted me) what is really best, upon the whole, for myself or for you, I have not a word to say. Instead of complaining, I ought to abound in praise. My chief trouble is from a fear lest you should not have the same resignation to the will of God. Excuse this doubt, my dearest; I know your temper is tender and apprehensive; and I know (and I am not ungrateful) that you feel much for me. Though I value your love more than a thousand kingdoms, I could almost wish to possess it in a degree more consistent with your quiet. It is well the paper is full, that I can add no more, perhaps I might contradict myself upon the spot, for my last assertion. How could I bear that you should love me less than you do!

Sierra Leone, March 23.

Sometimes, in travelling, when I have met with two or three different roads, and have not been sure which was the right, I have deliberated a little, and then gravely taken the wrong: so it often happens in my writing to you. When I beat the bush of my brains for a subject, I start so many that I know not which to follow; and at last perhaps, choose that which I am the least able

to manage. I have been sitting in a wise suspense, whether I should try to divert, or advise, or thank you. I am awakened at the first; the second, if needful, (for I would not pay you a false compliment,) is difficult for me to perform rightly; and the third I have almost worn threadbare, though I have never expressed the half of my meaning. Then for other things, one day here is so like another, that there hardly arises a new incident in a month; which, by the bye, demands my acknowledgment; for life is usually chequered with many events which, when well managed by an impatient temper, may furnish whole sheets, yea, quires of complaints. And as nothing extraordinary occurs in my own history, neither do I hear of any thing interesting among the natives —politics or scandal have little place in this country:—under these circumstances I am hard put to it to write any thing; and this difficulty I have made so often, not only an excuse, but a subject, that I am tired of that likewise. But, as when a man is thoroughly hungry, he will eat what would once have seemed hard fare; so rather than forego the pleasure of writing to you, I make shift with any thing that will serve to fill up the paper.

Bence Island, March 30.

I AM now at the factory, in the river of Sierra Leone. We are at length preparing for sea, and I hope to find all in readiness when I return from Sherbro, where I purpose going to-morrow, in the long boat, to finish my business in that river, and hope to be back in about a fortnight. Therefore, as it will be some time before I can write to you, I would not omit to-night, though we are very busy. I hope this will be the last cruize I shall make this voyage. I have had so many, that I should be almost weary, did I not consider that your interest leads me, and that your love will, I hope, in due time, pay me for my trouble.

Bence Island, April 10.

BY the mercy of God, I am returned safe and well from my voyage in the long-boat, without meeting any harm, though not without some fatigue; but that is always welcome for your sake. No one here can guess, by my looks or behaviour, how much of my heart is in another quarter of the world. In short, you would not yourself desire that I should bear your absence better than I do; yea, I fear, if you could see me you would suspect me of indifference. But I should beg you to take my word, rather than

judge by appearances. I hope to be, in a few days, on my way to the West Indies, whither my thoughts have often gone before me, in expectation of finding letters from you, which, next to your company, is the greatest pleasure I can think of. Let those be pleased with letters-patent who can be satisfied with honours and riches: if I do not absolutely despise these things, I can pronounce them trifles when compared with the satisfactions of mutual love, which so far resemble the joys of a good conscience, that nothing adventitious can either give them or take them away. They who possess an affluence of all other temporal good, if devoid of this generous tenderness, are in my view, objects of pity. I speak, as St. Paul says, after the manner of men; for notwithstanding all my encomiums upon love, I hold it to be very dangerous, and indeed destructive, unless regulated and governed by a due sense of religion.

Bence I[illegible], April 19.

I HAVE been happy this evening, in a solitary ramble round this island. I studiously avoided all company, and chose a retired walk, where I could vent my thoughts aloud, without fear of being overheard. The night was perfectly fine and serene, and I was favoured with a frame of mind that I cannot always command. The ship was in sight at a small distance, which gave the first turn to my meditations. My thoughts went back to the time when I first saw her upon the stocks in the builder's yard; and from thence led me to review the different scenes in which I have been engaged since I left Liverpool; which furnished me with so many instances of a kind preserving Providence, that I was, in a remarkable manner, emboldened and encouraged to recommend the rest of the voyage to the same gracious protection. May I never forget this night! I could not be long in the exercise of prayer and praise, without interesting you largely in it; and I think I never prayed more earnestly for myself, than I have to-night for you. I am now quite easy and composed, which is the nearest approach to happiness that I desire in this world, when I am not with you.

Plantanes, April 25.

ACCEPT this letter as a proof that, in the midst of company and business, I am still thinking of you. I write, and talk, and trade at the same time. I am now to inform you, that I am just finishing, and hope to sail this night, or to-morrow morning, for St.

Christopher's. I completed eight months upon the coast yesterday; in which time I have witnessed a variety of scenes, and have often been upon the brink of apparent danger, but am preserved in health and safety hitherto. If I call my long stay a disappointment, I would remember, that former disappointments, by the over-ruling providence and goodness of God, have proved, in the event, to my advantage; and I trust it will be so still. Thus I often preach to you, and you will not wonder, that having your peace of mind more at heart than any thing that can be named, I should be frequently inculcating what I believe, yea, what I am very sure, will be most conducive to it. If you could form a judgment of the numberless escapes and deliverances I met with last voyage, I think you would never fear for me again. I have now a better ship and ship's company, and am better provided than then. I leave this with a large packet enclosed, to go by a vessel which is expected to sail, in about three weeks, directly for England, and will probably arrive there before you can hear of me from the West Indies.

At Sea, May 4.

If I can contrive any thing to say, I hope now to be more regular in my correspondence; for I have left the greater part of the cares and troubles, which used to divide my thoughts and time, behind me in Africa. I am now about three hundred miles on my way to St. Kitt's, and hope to get the trade-wind soon, which will be fair for the rest of the passage.

I lately enclosed you four sheets, which bring the history of my voyage down to the 12th of February. I have sent you twelve in all, by different conveyances, besides their covers, which were not blank paper. For all this, I charge your account, as the merchants say; or rather I acknowledge myself still your debtor for the favourable reception I know they will find, and which they are no further entitled to, than as proofs of an inclination to please. If there is merit in that, I shall not affect so much modesty as to disclaim it: for it is the business and glory of my life, to endeavour to act up to those professions which first induced you to confide in me. My mind runs so much upon the wished-for pleasure of letters from you when I arrive at St. Kitt's, that I often dream I have them in my hand, and when awake am often dictating for you; and by reading those I have already received, I can make shrewd guesses how kind and good you will appear in those which are yet to come. But when I have done my best, I persuade myself that I shall find, as I have usually done in all relating to you, that my expectations will not only be answered, but exceeded.

At Sea, May 7.

I was sensibly disappointed in missing the letter you mention obliging me with by a ship from London. I should have found in that some particulars of your long journey. How gladly would I have prevented you the inconvenience of that long and lonely journey, if performing it for you myself on foot could have done it. As it was, I could only attend you with my thoughts and prayers. How much am I indebted to the divine goodness for restoring you home in safety and peace! The mention of footing it, reminds me of my solitary walk to Liverpool in the year 1748. Solitary indeed it was then; but could I have known that the time was coming when you would accompany me on the same road, I should have thought it pleasant, in defiance of heat, dust, and fatigue. But my only business at London, which was with you, I left unfinished: I was short of money, destitute of friends, without prospect of a livelihood for myself, and still more of having it in my power to make proposals to you; and therefore had nothing to cheer me. When I recollect these dark seasons, I cannot but pause to wonder at the goodness of God, who was even then leading me, though I neither knew him, nor the way by which I went. How wonderfully was every obstacle to our union removed, and how happy has that event been (I hope I may say) to us both. I might have proved a wretch, insensible and ungrateful, when I had gained my point. Such I see is the folly and inconstancy of many. But my satisfaction has been still upon the increase; and, so far as happiness is attainable here, I think I have known it, and with as few drawbacks, for the time, as any person living.

At Sea, May 18.

We are now about half way to St. Christopher's from Guinea, in point of distance; and I hope nearer in respect of time, as we are in the trade-wind, which blows most of the year from the eastern quarter. Though I count the days and hours I am from you, my time does not hang heavy upon my hands: a part of it is employed, twice or thrice a day, in praying for you; a part of it in reading and studying the Bible. The rest of my leisure is divided between reading, writing, and the mathematics, as my inclination leans. I pass my verdict upon the actions of Cæsar, Pompey, and twenty other hot-headed heroes of antiquity; and when I reflect upon their mighty designs, their fatigues and risks, and at last their disappointments, even when they attained the desired object; I ask myself sometimes, with a smile, "What trifles are

these compared with love ?" sometimes with a sigh. "What trifles are these compared with eternity ?" The latter question brings my censure home to myself, and forces me to confess, that the greater part of my own schemes and prospects are no less vanities than those which I pity in others. I am pleased with the mathematics, because there is truth and certainty in them, which are seldom found in other branches of learning. Yet even in these, I am discouraged; for the more I advance, the more clearly I perceive, that the greatest human knowledge amounts but to a more pompous proof of our ignorance, by showing us how little we know of any thing, and how many inquiries may be started, concerning which we can know nothing. Then again, what we *can* attain requires so much time and pains, that it scarcely quits cost; especially, as it seems needless to toil for knowledge in this world, under so many disadvantages, when possibly, before I have been an hour within the vail, I shall know more, intuitively, than my namesake, Sir Isaac, had ever a glimpse of. However, I still jog on in this road, partly to keep me from idleness, which is the source either of sin or disquiet; and partly because I consider every little improvement I can make to be valuable, so far as it may enable me to appear to more advantage in the character of your husband.

At Sea, May 28.

I EXPECT that we are now within three or four days' sail of our port. Thus far we have crossed the ocean again without trouble or harm.

I hope you will derive encouragement and thankfulness by recollecting, from what you may have heard or seen, how many persons in my way of life have parted from their families and affections since I left you, and with no less pleasing prospects and probabilities, who, before this time, have been cut off from the hope of a return. One instance I shall mention, because I think you know the man, Mr. ****, who sailed chief mate of the Adlington. He had a constitution likely to wear many years, a good character and interest, and a wife and family. He had been master of a ship in some home trade, but chose to go as mate to Guinea, one voyage, to introduce himself into this line of business. His views would probably have been answered, if he had lived; but he was killed in an insurrection of the slaves before he had been two months upon the coast.

If this story, and many more of the same kind, which the common news-papers will furnish, should increase your fears for me, I shall be sorry; and must say the fault would be in yourself. I

am still safe, though I was liable to the same danger. My slaves likewise were, for a time disposed to be very troublesome; but I was always providentially favoured with a timely intimation of their designs, so that they never proceeded to open disturbance; and for several months past, they have been as quiet and tractable as children. Having had so many repeated proofs of a gracious, and always present Protector, I think it would be not only folly, but ingratitude and sin to distrust him now. So that even with regard to yourself, though you are unspeakably the dearest blessing and comfort of my life; for whose sake chiefly it is, that all other advantages appear desirable; and though I have no information of your welfare, later than of nine months' date, yet I cannot say that I am uneasy. While I hear nothing to the contrary, I shall trust, pray, and believe that the Lord still preserves you in mercy to us both, and will, in good time, bring us happily together again.

St. Christopher's, June 3.

We arrived here in safety last night. I can say little more, as I expect to be called on for my letter every minute; and I would not miss the opportunity if I could only send a single line. I feel enough in my own disappointment, to oblige me to be punctual. I promised myself many letters from you, upon my arrival here: judge, then, (if you can,) how much I am chagrined, not to find even one. I am sure it is not owing to any neglect of yours; and though I have not heard from you so long, I am not quite uneasy. I have committed you into the hands of God, whose goodness abounds to me daily. On him I depend, and endeavour to think, no news is good news.

Sandy Point, St. Kitt's June 8.

I informed you, on the 3d, of my arrival, but was then too busy to enlarge. I have now leisure enough, but must confess I write with a heavy heart. I cannot account for having no letters from you after so many months, if you are well. But I endeavour to compose myself by a submissive dependence upon the providence of God, to whom I have so often, and so earnestly commended you. For my peace's sake, I try to suppose that the letters I so longed for, have by some means miscarried. I will endeavour not to mention this subject any more, but I cannot promise to forget it: in every other point, I have all possible satisfaction. Most of the cargo is sold, and at a good price. I hope the loss upon the voyage will prove inconsiderable, and I believe my own interest in

it, will be better than the former. I was going to add, as usual, that I expect my best reward from you; but this thought gave rise to another which drew from me a heart-felt sigh. But I remember my promise: I have sent a boat up to Antigua upon the peradventure that your letters may have been lodged for me there. I know a separation must at some time take place, but I hope and pray it may be deferred till we have more strength to bear it. A perfect acquiescence in the will of God, could we attain it, would be worth more than mountains of Gold and silver. I know, as I have often said, that our concerns are under the best and kindest management. I know who brought us together, and has blest us with a mutual affection; for want of which, marriage is a clog and burden to thousands. And he knows our passions and our weakness; and, unless we over-rate the comforts he bestows, will never deprive us of them, but with a design of giving us something still better in their room.

Sandy Point, June 12.

I HAVE sent away all my spare sheets, and shall take care to be constantly provided with something for every opportunity. But to what purpose do I write, when perhaps my dear M**** may be past the power of reading? Indeed, I find it a heavy task now, to what it used to be! but since I am not quite without hope of your welfare, (which is the very best I can say,) I must write on, lest I should subject you to an anxiety like that which I now feel. I am forced to assume an air of cheerfulness in company, but, maugre all my precautions, I often discover myself to be a hypocrite, by my involuntary sighs; and at night I dream I know not what.

Yet when you read this, do not think I was unhappy when I wrote it. My hopes, for the most part, prevail; and I consider, even now, that if we meet happily at last, I shall soon be overpaid for all my care. Under such a disappointment as this, it is necessary either that I should not be quite easy, or that I should love you less than I do. You will allow the former evil to be a mere trifle, compared with the other.

I have informed my owners that I cannot undertake to do any thing upon the Windward Coast next season, the trade is so overdone. If they will send me, I am ready to go; but I will not be blamed, in case of ill-success, for not honestly giving my opinion. If they take my advice, perhaps they may send me to some other part of the coast, or to some other part of the world. I am indif-

ferent as to the how, or where, provided I may be permitted sometimes to tell you, it is all for your sake; and to hear you say, that you accept it so.

Sandy Point, June 21.

I HAVE sent you several letters and packets since my arrival. I cannot now complain, as formerly, for want of a subject. I have one with which I could fill many sheets, but have promised not to touch upon it, if I can help it. So that I am at present under a double difficulty: it is equally hard for me to write what would entertain you, or to refrain from what I know would grieve you. Well, I must submit. My happiness with you is such, that all incidental pains and uneasinesses seem mere trifles, when either past or to come, however hard to bear when present. My pleasures, on the contrary, whether at the time, in recollection, or in prospect, always affords me consolation. Thus, though there is, strictly speaking, more evil than good in life, yet Providence so orders it, or at least so orders my share, that I find a little of the real good overbalances a great deal of the evil. My fears and uncertainties upon your account are much preferable to my being a mercenary wretch, incapable of valuing you as I ought. When I consider how many I see who are blind to the merit of their wives, because they are secure of them, I learn how much I owe to the Lord for blessing me with the knowledge of my true interest, and a mind susceptive of tenderness and sensibility.

I believe I was rather sparing of my promises in the time of courtship; at least I engaged for no more than is usual on such occasions; but it has been my happiness since, to endeavour to act fully up to what I had said. And I now see, by the conduct of many who treat such things as matters of course, how nearly my duty and my pleasure were united, and how miserable I must have been, if capable of wronging the confidence you placed in me. I see that those who cannot find their satisfactions *at home*, seek them in vain *abroad*. And thus I understand the literal meaning of the word *diversions;* which are only, or chiefly, agreeable to those who wish to turn their thoughts from their own situation. What numbers are there who frequent the theatres, assemblies, balls, and the various scenes of dissipation, without being really pleased for one half hour, either with themselves, or with any body or thing around them? they languish continually for a change, and rather than continue in the same pursuit, are willing to change for the worse.

A letter from Liverpool, dated April 5, informs me of the death

of our friend Mrs. M***. What a striking lesson! A beautiful woman, in the bloom of youth, with gay hopes and prospects, cut off in the first year of marriage! As you mentioned her being with child, I think it probable that she died in child-bed. Alas! the vanity of this world and all its enjoyments! How little do we know what to wish for! I hope I shall always be contented and pleased, if it should please God that you never have to encounter that terrible risk. How could I bear to consider myself as the immediate, though innocent, cause of your death! I own that children, from the consideration of their being yours, would be highly acceptable to me, if it were so appointed; but I hope I shall never be so mad as to wish for them, for fear the consequences should ruin me. I know I am already happy without them.

Sandy Point, June 23.

My letters were sealed, and just going away, but I gladly break open yours, to tell you, that the boat which I sent to Antigua has brought me (Oh how kind and careful is my dear!) six letters from you, besides several others from friends, which, though very acceptable are of less importance to my peace. I am sorry now, that I disclosed my fears to you, as you will perhaps be uneasy for me, till you learn by this that my wound is healed. I assure you, I dissembled what I could, and expressed much less concern than I felt, because I was writing to you. I have to praise God for the mercy of this day, and to confess the sin and folly of my distrust of his goodness. I have only had time, as yet, to read your letters twice. I see, already, that I cannot fully answer them, but I am sure my full heart means you thanks.

Sandy Point, July 5.

I THINK this is the twelfth letter I have sent you from hence in the space of a month, and they have been all pretty full; and I believe I shall hardly send you above one, or at most, two more, before I sail myself, which I hope will be within ten days. In some of my former, I have commented upon three of yours, which I have received here.

The next, in order of time, is dated the third of January. I began the new year very seriously, and wish I could say, the whole, hitherto, had been of a piece; but there has not a day passed without my prayers, that every blessing may rest upon you. I thank you for resolving not to like any one but whom I first ap-

prove. I wish not to trouble you with many exceptions; but perhaps sometimes your judgment and mine may differ a little; for you have too much good-nature and openness to suspect some of the poor fluttering things that intrude upon you. I aim at one in particular, but you are sensible that some, of whom you once thought better than they deserved, have before now explained their own characters, and justified my censure; and, sooner or later, all such will appear in their proper colours; for, where there are no good principles, professions and pretences must fall to the ground. You have given a good turn to Mrs. P****'s backwardness to believe we were married; but if we live to see her together, she shall speak, if she pleases, for herself, and tell us whether your compliance did not surprise her more than my perseverance. But I care not which it was, since I know that I am happy. Happy indeed, since you acknowledge that you think yourself so; for I never was so poor a wretch as to think of being happy alone. The only risk I ran was this—lest I should presume too much upon myself in expecting to inspire you with a reciprocal regard. The event has, indeed, answered to my wishes, but, when I think seriously of myself, I cannot but wonder at it, and at my own hardiness in the undertaking.

You say, my love continued, and yours increased. But has not mine increased likewise? I have no similie to illustrate the difference, between the regard I bear you now, and that which I had for you before marriage. I was not a hypocrite then. My affection was, perhaps, as strong as, in those circumstances, it could be. But I loved you, as I may say, for your looks; my love had little more to feed upon. As yet there were none of those endearments and obligations, which now continually throng my remembrance. In short, I find by experience, that love, to be stable and permanent, must be mutual; and then, after years and years of possession, it will be still increasing; and every new endeavour to please, will produce a new pleasure. How different is this from the vice which the libertine would disguise under the name of love!

Sandy Point, July 11.

If I have a good passage, I may be in England before this notice reaches you, for I hope to sail this evening, and the vessel by which I send it is bound to London, and will stay here two or three days after me. But as she is a better sailer than mine, may probably arrive first. I allow you to begin to think of my arrival when you hear I am upon my way home, but beg you not be im-

patient for news. Passages from the West Indies are very uncertain. It somtimes has happened that a vessel, which has sailed a month after another, has reached home as much before her. I have told you, that there is not a stronger or safer ship than mine upon the sea; and the same good Providence which preserved me last voyage, in a very old and crazy vessel, will be with me now; and I am going in the finest season of the year. In short, though I ought not confidently to presume on any thing in this uncertain world, I derive from the tenour of the dispensations I have met with for several years past, a cheerful persuasion, that the God in whom I trust will preserve me for further mercies, and still make me an instance of his goodness to the most unworthy.

At Sea, July 23.

I AM almost ashamed to say, that though I have been twelve days at sea, this is the first time of my writing to you. But I hope to be more frequent in future. I have, indeed, been very busy, and am so still. But I will not offer so poor an excuse; for if I can find time to eat or sleep, I can as well find an hour for your service, which is the second best business of my life. I have had much peace since I received your letters; but I may now venture to own, that my disappointment till I had them, was the greatest trial I have known since I could call you mine. You know the strength of my passion, and you know well (observe my confidence) the painfulness of absence and silence from what we most value. But it is now happily over; and I hope what I then suffered will prove for the good of both hereafter.

The weather is fine, and the wind fair. I am drawing nearer to you every moment. Perhaps, as my prospect brightens, my genius may improve. My good intentions, at least, will not be wanting to entertain you. Thus much by way of preface. It grows late, and another agreeable employment awaits me; I mean to recommend you to God in my prayers, that every evil may be kept from you while you sleep. I shall then lie down myself, with my usual wish, (which sometimes happens,) that I may dream myself in your company.

At Sea, July 24.

You think, by my last letters, that I am grown more grave than formerly. I do not intend to be more dull, nor am I troubled with low spirits; but I own that gravity, so far as is con-

sistent with cheerfulness of heart, appears to me desirable. And I hope I shall return to you graver (in my sense of the word) than I have been, but that this change will not be to my disadvantage as a companion, and least of all to you. Cannot I remind you of many happy hours we have passed together, when noisy mirth, and the mistaken gaiety in which thousands are bewildered, would have seemed tasteless and impertinent?

Perhaps when you read this, I may be at your elbow to ask you —if not, I beg you to ask yourself—When sometimes you have been sitting alone in a melancholy muse, perhaps the more lonely for not having heard from me—when your imagination has painted the dangers to which I was exposed, and your memory has officiously furnished you with instances of some who have suffered by such disasters;—or, when you have recollected the circumstances of our past endearments—and to finish all, when you have recalled me to your thoughts in the action of parting from you without a word or sigh, for fear of increasing your trouble—I say, when a mixture of these, and similar ideas, have wrought you up to that pitch of regret and concern which must be sometimes paid for the privilege of loving—tell me, if then, the world, with all its gaieties and amusements, has not appeared a bubble, a shadow, a wilderness? Why then should we not always be too grave to be pleased with them, since we have repeated proofs, that none of the world's gewgaws can afford us relief in our mournful hours? So far from helping us at such times, we prefer our own thoughts (though painful enough) to every thing that offers to divert us, and carry it with caution to our dearest friends, lest they should steal our grief away; I have said *We* and *Us*, all along, having no doubt but a description of my own feelings will answer to yours likewise. Yet, after all, we seem to be persuaded, that a more happy couple than we are, cannot be found. If so, do we not allow and prove, that happiness is not to be expected in this life; at least, not in any nor all the things that are of an earthly growth? Who has it, if we have it not? And what have we? Perhaps a precarious month in a year, which, considered in itself, is to me valuable indeed. But it must be owned, that the more we are pleased the short space we are together, the more we are at a loss in the long interval of separation; during the greater part of which, we know no more of each other than of the silent grave.

The insensible, selfish creatures, whom caprice or custom yoke in a married state, without design or confidence, are strangers to our satisfactions: this is true; but neither do they feel the drawback. To quit a person dearer than eyes or life—to be at a painful uncertainty for many weary months for a welfare more pre-

cious to us than our own—and from a sense of happiness at home, to be raised to a pitch incapable of tasting the common entertainments of life abroad—to be always fearing what may never happen and regretting what can never be recalled—from these, and many more pains which I feel, but cannot describe, their insensibility secures them. These are appropriate, prerogative troubles, which none but lovers, nay, none but happy lovers, are capable of suffering.

At Sea, July 25.

A STRANGER might suppose I was yesterday complaining of my lot, but you know me better. That I can love; that my regard was directed to you, and met with a suitable return from you, are my chief temporal blessings, in which, notwithstanding all disadvantages, I still deem myself happy; that is, in a qualified sense: so far as this imperfect state will admit, and far beyoud my deserts, or the common attainment of mankind. But for this I am much beholden to my gravity, such as it is. For should I grant, that a serious temper is not quite necessary to give us the full relish of our enjoyments when present, (which is more, however, than I mean to grant,) yet surely it is needful to support us in the want of them.

Though, in the moment of taking my leave of you, I felt more than I can express; yet, in the midst of my grief, and when quitting what I most valued, I thought myself happier than thousands can be in the possession of their wishes. I left you, and with the expectation of a long absence; but the sense of the divine providence, and my trust in God, greatly obviated my cares and fears, and led my thoughts forward to the hour (I hope now nearly opproaching) which will restore me to you again. I was like a person committing his dearest treasure to his dearest friend; and then went down stairs with a mixture of peace and grief not easily described; not as violently torn away, but as willingly foregoing you for a while, that I might better deserve you.

I considered, that the Lord, who had joined us, could easily have so appointed our affairs, as to free us from the necessity of such long separations; and I thought it would have been so, but that He, who knows all things, knows the indulgence would hurt us in some particulars, perhaps in many, which we are not aware of. I felt for the uneasiness which your regard for me might sometimes occasion; but I saw, that even this might lead your mind more closely and frequently to him for help, and if so be a benefit I confess, the thought of death, on either side, made me serious

If I had apprehended, that was the last time I should hold you in my arms, how could I have left you at all? No;—then methinks, wind and tide, business and honour, would have pleaded in vain, and I must have been carried from you by force. But this, which was my only dread, hardly occurred to me at the time, and was soon removed, by an inward persuasion that we should happily meet again. And, oh! could you form an idea of the evils I have since been preserved through, and kept for the most part in peace, seldom knowing where the danger lay, till it was past, you would allow that I am a living proof of the truth of those promises which I endeavour, by the grace of God, to make my stay and my trust.

I hope I have made out the advantages of a religious frame of mind, in my present situation. Let me now consider, whether it will not be equally necessary, and conducive to our happiness, upon a re-union. Will it not be an additional pleasure, to think that we do not meet again, as it were by chance, but by the care of a watchful Providence, in answer to prayer; as a token of his favour, and an earnest to encourage our future dependence upon him? How could I, loving you as I do, be easy a moment, without this dependence, in such a changeable state, and not knowing what the next day or hour may bring forth? Nor is religion a restraint upon any real or rational pleasure. For, as the apostle emphatically expresses it, God gives us *all* things *richly*, to *enjoy*; not grudgingly, but freely and richly; not to raise desires which may not be gratified; what he gives, is with the design that it may be enjoyed. It is true, there is a modus a moderation, enjoined; but this, likewise, is for our benefit, that we may not spoil the relish of our comforts, nor indispose ourselves for the reception of his further and better gifts.

At Sea, July 26.

Since, then, a serious and dependent spirit secures to us the best enjoyment of our blessings, and obviates, in a great measure, the inconveniences to which they are subject; what remains, but that we should resolve and endeavour, to the best of our power, to cultivate this temper, and to live so as has appeared to us most reasonable, when we have been uneasy and afflicted? The contrary behaviour carries in it so much disingenuousness, that I am ashamed when I reflect upon my past guilt and folly. For it is certain, that I have often been least observant and attentive, when a grateful mind would have been most so. For these reasons I hope, upon my return, to appear more grave than ever, to one

part of our acquaintance; but then I shall be always cheerful, in the approbation of my conscience. I have chiefly written all this, upon my own account, that the perusal of it hereafter may confirm and strengthen me in my present views and desires.

At Sea, July, 31.

I AM persuaded, as I have often said, that if it was in all points best for us to be always together, we should never be parted. He who has already done so much for us, could easily add this to the rest of his mercies, and perhaps at a proper time, he will. If not, let us entreat him to direct our thoughts and pursuits to a better state, where no separation, anxiety, or grief, shall disturb us for ever. The trials of this life are highly useful and necessary to prevent our minds from fixing here; especially to us, who have so much to prize in each other. But let not passion mislead us to suppose, that we are not capable of a happiness, as far beyond our present experience or conception, as the heavens are higher than the earth. Our mutual affection, which now makes life chiefly valuable to us, will, I trust subsist in a nobler manner, when the transient causes upon which it was at first founded shall, perhaps, have no more place in our remembrance; at least, will not be considered in the light we now esteem them, but will appear truly valuable, only so far as they were, by the blessing of God, subservient to a further and better end. And how will it then increase our joys, (if our joys will then be capable of increase,) to think that we have assisted each other in obtaining them!

At Sea, August 5.

SUPPOSING that, if you are in health to-day, you have been a partaker of the communion at church, I attended you with my prayers, about the time; that you might receive a blessing, and have cause to look back upon the opportunity with comfort. If it please God to continue our present favourable appearances, I hope to join with you the next time, with a pleasure which only they who have been long separated from public worship, and who have so many mercies to acknowledge as I have, can conceive. It comforts me to think, that you are favoured with all the advantages of which my way of life deprives me for a whole year, or longer. And I hope you suitably improve them.

My affection carries my wishes and desires for you, far beyond the narrow bounds of the time we can expect to pass together here; and I shall be glad to find, that a preparation for an hereafter has a place in your thoughts, much superior to any concern or regard for me. For I am a poor, weak creature, incapable, dearly as I love you, of shielding you from the smallest evil, or of doing you any service so great, as by dissuading you from placing too much dependence upon a worm like myself. Think not that I undervalue your affection: I am sure I would not exchange it for all the kingdoms upon earth. But there is a regard, which is due only to Him who first inspired us with love to each other. While our mutual affection is restrained, in a proper subordination to him, I hope we shall not be blameable for preferring it, as I do, to whatever else can be named. But if we exceed this boundary, we not only sin, but expose ourselves to a double risk of having our comforts blighted, either by death, or by heavy troubles. All that we possess or value is the immediate gift of God, who proposes the most ingenuous and grateful motives to win us to his service. But if, by fondly reposing on creatures, we pervert his goodness, and set up a rest independent of the Creator, what can be expected, but that he will either recall the blessings we so little deserve, or throw in bitter ingredients to spoil our pleasures?

I tremble to think how much I have exposed you, by my blindness and folly in this respect. When I was so long at St. Kitt's, without hearing from you, that I almost concluded you were dead, my conscience confirmed my fears; for I knew that I deserved to be punished where my feelings were most tender and sensible. This conviction lay upon my mind, with a weight that no words can express. Ah! thought I, but for me, she might have been still living and happy. My weakness and ingratitude have shortened her days! But God is merciful: after I had suffered thus for about a fortnight, I received your letters. But had the event proved according to my dread and my desert, what would have become of me?—To survive you upon any terms would be a great trial; but it then seemed comparatively light, could it have been abstracted from the aggravation of having sinned you away. But—I cannot give you a just idea of the state of my mind at that time. I thank God, it is happily over, and I have now a comfortable hope that we shall meet again in peace. If we do, surely I shall not be such a wretch again.

At Sea, August 16.

Now I may write leisurely, for the wind is contrary. Though I am earnestly desirous to see you, I would not be impatient, nor wish, if it was in my power, to fix the time myself. I trust it shall be in a happy hour, and I desire to leave the *when*, to God. Our times are in his hands. It will signify little a hundred years hence, whether I was five, or six, or more weeks, on my passage homewards from St. Kitt's, in the year 1753. And, indeed, it will signify but little when I have been half an hour with you. I shall then soon forget the inconvenience of delay. If I feel any concern, it is on your account; for my love would not willingly have you kept in an hour's suspense for me. But my judgment speaks more reasonably, and tells me that, as disappointments and hindrances have often proved of real service to myself; so, perhaps, they may be to you likewise. And the dependent frame of spirit, in which I am now happy, would be worth your purchase, if you have not yet attained it, (but I hope you rather exceed me,) at the price of not seeing me this twelvemonth.

At Sea, August 18.

I AM brought in safety to the close of another week. The evening of a Saturday, I usually allot to the exercise of prayer and praise. It is not foreign to this design to employ half an hour in writing to you, to invite you to join with me in praising our gracious Preserver, as we are jointly interested in each other's concernment.

The wind has been Easterly a few days, but it now seems to be coming about fair again. For my own part, I consider the winds from every quarter to be fair; though, in compliance with our customary forms of speaking, I call those so which allow me to sail to my intended port in a straight line. When it changes, I am obliged to change my course; and to go something about. But they all contribute to answer my best wish, at the proper time. And probably a contrary wind is no less conducive to this end than a more direct one; for we know not when we go too fast or too slow. A ship has often been hurried into danger and distress by a quick passage.

I shall be with you in my thought to-morrow, in the church, in your retirements, and at your meals. I rise early to pray for your happiness, before you awake; and sit up past your hour, that I may beg a blessing upon your rest, before I go to rest myself. Some persons would smile at all this. Let them smile—

so that I may give the most sincere and serious proof of my affection, by praying at all hours, and in all circumstances, for your peace and welfare.

At Sea, August 20.

We have again a fair wind, and very pleasant weather, I have often heard your sex compared to the ocean. I hope the resemblance does not generally hold, (I am happy to be certain, that in one instance it does not,) for there cannot be a more apt emblem of inconstancy. This spot of water, which I am now passing over, which at present is as smooth as a meadow, spread round far as the eye can reach, like a great mirror, and reflects the beams of the moon unruffled, has, perhaps, been the grave of many; at least, their terror, and will often be so. It may be, that the next who follow me, will find a very different scene. For let the wind blow with violence from any quarter, for the space of four hours, and all will be in confusion; the mirror broken, the level destroyed, and nothing to be seen but alternately yawning gulfs and moving mountains, every one seeming to rise higher than the rest, and the smallest sufficient to destroy the stoutest ship, and to confound human confidence in a moment; if not continually restrained by that sovereign power which rules the waves with a nod, and limits them to their bounds, beyond which, in their highest rage and confusion, they cannot rise the tenth part of an inch. How they feel, at such times, who have no reliance but on their own skill and precaution, I cannot say; but was it so with me, I should often prove a very coward; and, indeed, always; for when danger was not apparent, I should dread it as being imminent. When I compare the various contingencies to which a ship is liable, with the best preventions or remedies that art can furnish against them, they seem so disproportionate, that, were it not for a superintending Providence, I should think it a wonder indeed if any one vessel made a voyage in safety. But as in this view I should be always afraid, so now, since I am certain that I am under the care of God in all places, I do not, even in turbulent weather, suffer more anxiety than is needful to engage my attention to the proper use of means. This is my part: and if means are succeeded, it is by the blessing of God, without which my diligence would be unavailing. The watchman waketh but in vain, *except* the Lord keep the city; but it does not follow, that *because* the Lord keeps the city the watchman may go to sleep, but rather the contrary.

At Sea, August 29.

I TOLD you yesterday, that I might probably dine to-day at Liverpool; but I must wait longer. Last night brought us, with fair wind and with fair weather, within four hours' sail of our port. We stopped to wait for day-light and a pilot. The day came at its appointed time, but, instead of a pilot, brought a strong gale of wind, with thick weather; so that I was glad to turn about and away to sea again; and may be thankful if I can keep clear of the sands and dangers which lie before the entrance of the river, which I trust I shall; for I believe the providence of God has not brought me safely across two oceans, to leave me to my own poor shifts at last. It really blew very hard, and looked very dismally at four this morning: but the weather is now more moderate, though still dark and rainy. I was something anxious in the night, but am at present tolerably easy. God is my defence; if he is on my side I must be preserved: the winds and waves obey him!

I can now give you a new proof that my dependence upon God is not in vain. When I wrote the above, I was in a very indifferent situation: a hard gale of wind, thick weather, and very little sea-room. Had things continued to another day, I might have suffered shipwreck within a few miles of my port; but I had scarcely laid the paper by, when the weather changed to quite fine, and the wind came about fair. Before noon I got a pilot on board, and I may now hope to be at Liverpool this very night. Surely no one experiences the goodness and care of Divine Providence more continually than I do! Surely the Lord hears and answers my poor prayers!

THIRD VOYAGE TO AFRICA.

1753.

At Sea, October 26.

My Dearest,

I now begin to prepare materials for new packets. The first thing in course is to tell you that, by the blessing of the Lord, all is well with me. We had an extraordinary good outlet to sea, and lost sight of the last land the third day after parting with you. We are all in good health and spirits. My time passes, perhaps, too pleasantly, considering that possibly you may be mourning at the very instant when I am most cheerful. But I excuse myself to myself, by pleading that it was your desire I should be as cheerful as I can. At all times I have room in my thoughts for you; and the most pleasant of all my hours, are those which are devoted to praying for you. My mind attends you this week, from stage to stage, on your long journey home. The wise tasteless *many* would smile at this attention, and call me a trifler. So let them. If it gains a smile of acceptance from you, I will account it a matter of importance; and smile at them, in my turn; though I rather pity them.

At Sea, November 2.

We saw and passed the island of Madeira this morning, (which is distant from Liverpool about 1500 miles,) though this is but the thirteenth day since we left the rock. As we are now entering that part of the ocean where the wind blows from the eastern quarter the year round, I have a prospect of a quick passage. Should it prove so, it will be agreeable, especially as I have not been left to wish for any thing particular, being sensible that I know not how to choose the best means and times for accomplishing my own desires if the choice was given to me. Dispatch will be welcome, as affording me the prospect of a more speedy return to you. But should I meet with delay, I hope to acquiesce, and to believe that it will keep me back from something that would be worse. Was I to judge otherwise, I should sin against the experience of many years, in which I have always had my wishes gratified, so far as was consistent with my safety; and have met with no disappointment, or trouble, but what I have afterwards perceived was intended, or at least over-ruled, for my benefit.

In two points, we are, and have been, favoured above thousands. First, in a tender and reciprocal regard, which renders it

impossible for either of us to be pleased or pained alone; and, secondly, that this sympathy has been chiefly, I could almost say wholly, employed in a participation of pleasures, with very little interruption, (the pain of absence excepted,) on either side. I know not which of these blessings is most valuable; but certainly, when combined, (as with us,) they constitute the nearest approach to happiness, in a temporal view, that this imperfect state will admit. There are many who, in point of outward advantages, may seem equal, or superior to us; but then their contracted, selfish spirits cannot relish or improve them. Again, there are others of generous and feeling dispositions, who borne down by the pressure of accumulated afflictions, derive no advantage from their sensibility, unless it be a privilege to have a more exquisite reception of misery. There are those who could bear adversity in their own persons with tolerable composure, but feel a tenfold distress by seeing others involved with them, whose peace is dearer to them than their own. Help me to be thankful! I have no rent-rolls, or stock securities, to rely upon. But I have an inventory of another kind, a single article of which is preferable, in my eyes, to all the wealth of the Indies: health, content, liberty, love, the recollection of the past, and therein a lively image of what I may yet hope for, when it shall please God, in his good time, to restore me home, to receive from you in one hour, an ample recompense for the toils of a whole voyage.

At Sea, November 23.

I AIM, as well as I can, to mingle the agreeable and useful, in the course of my letters; and to offer what may entertain *you*, and, at the same time, improve us *both*. Our mutual happy affection supplies me with my largest fund, for the first purpose; and I am glad when I can properly introduce such reflections as may assist us in making our present satisfactions subservient to a still higher end. You will not be displeased with me for saying, that though you are dearer to me than the aggregate of all other earthly comforts, I wish to limit my passion within those bounds which God has appointed. Our love to each other, ought to lead us to love him supremely who is the author and source of all the good we possess or hope for. It is to him we owe that happiness in the marriage state which so many seek in vain; some of whom set out with such hopes and prospects, that their disappointments can be deduced from no other cause, than their having placed that high regard on a creature, which is due only to the Creator. He therefore withholds his blessing, (without which no union can subsist,) and their expectations, of course, end in satiety and indifference.

Perfect happiness cannot be attained in this life; but to come as near it as possible, well deserves our close application. As persons differ much in their views and inclinations, this attempt has been pursued by a great variety of mediums. The heathen philosophers were divided by a diversity of opinions, but they all agreed in an endeavour to teach mankind how to make the most of the good which life affords; and to bear its evils with the best grace possible. Some proposed one sort of rules; others afford new ones, and perhaps quite opposite to the former; but experience confuted them all. Being ignorant of the original nature, the true end, and the future destination of man; they failed in the cure of the evils under which he laboured, because they knew not the source from which they sprung. Some attempted to eradicate the passions, and placed happiness in a calmness, or rather an insensibility of soul; not reflecting that the Creator does nothing in vain, and that we have not a single *natural* inclination in our frame, but what he designed should, under a proper restriction, be gratified. But while they endeavoured to guard against care, and to restrain irregularity, their schemes tended to destroy some of our most distinguishing properties, and to exclude all tenderness and generosity of sentiment. Others, to avoid this absurdity, fell into a greater, if possible. By supposing the greatest happiness to consist in the most constant enjoyment of sensual pleasure, they opened a wide door to folly and enormity; and left each person to pursue his own propensity, under the notion of pleasure, without having recourse to any standard by which to regulate their conduct. These were the two very different plans of those who are generally deemed the wisest men among the ancients, the Stoics and the Epicureans. The one *pretended*, that the world afforded nothing worthy of their notice. The other *found*, there was nothing in the world deserving of the value they set upon it.

We are relieved from this uncertainty by the Gospel, which has brought life and immortality, true happiness and the means of attaining it, to light. And when we count over the various blessings we enjoy, we should always acknowledge, in the first place, this pledge and ground-work of every other mercy, that we were born in an age and a country affording us plain and sure instruction concerning our real interest and bounden duty, and how inseparably they are joined together. The Scripture teaches us how to enjoy prosperity in its full relish, by considering every instance of it as a gift and token of the divine goodness, always attentive to bless us; and likewise abates the pressure of adversity, by showing us how much our worst sufferings fall short of our demerits; how much more our Lord and Saviour endured for our sakes; and by the assurance it gives, that if we love God, all things, even those which at present are most disagreeable, shall work together

for our final good. Now, whatever troubles we meet with, we can look beyond them all to an everlasting rest.' The hour of death, so much dreaded by others, will put the true Christian in possession of eternal life. These things, reason, unassisted by revelation, could never have discovered.

The Christian religion is a consistent system, including the truth and morality of every sect of philosophy, and avoiding the errors of each. We now see the use and excellence of the passions, when duly regulated; though they render us unhappy when misapplied, because then they fall short of their proper end; for God, who (as the Scripture says) made us for himself, has formed us, with a vastness of capacity which he only can satisfy. And from hence proceeds that restlessness and disappointment, that love of change, which is the portion of those who place their highest desires and strongest hopes on any thing beneath the supreme good. We can now say, that pleasure is our chief happiness, by using the word with a propriety unknown to the Epicureans. We seek for pleasure, but it must be of the noblest kind, and most lasting duration. Upon this maxim we cheerfully renounce every present pleasure which, in its consequence, would occasion a pain greater, or more lasting, than the pleasure proposed; and we can welcome troubles, when we clearly perceive they are but light and momentary, if compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory to which they lead. This is an abstract of my principles, and, I believe, of yours likewise. These shall support us when we shall be constrained to leave each other; and these, I trust, shall join us again in a better world, to part no more for ever.

Plantanes, December 10.

THE three sheets enclosed will bring my history down to the end of November. I arrived in safety at Shebar, the second instant; found my friend Harry* well, and very glad to see me. Your picture, if it could speak might tell you how well pleased his *first* lady was with your present; for she dressed herself in it before *you*, and seemed to think that, in her new attire, she might stand in competition with you. I believe you will smile at her vanity, and think I pay you no great compliment, in prefering your *picture* to her *reality*. But had the finest woman in England stood by, she would, in my eye, have fallen almost equally short upon the comparison.

*Henry Tucher, a Mulatto, at Shebar, was the man with whom I had the largest connexion in business, and by whom I was never deceived.

I often look back, with a mixture of thankfulness and regret, upon the time we lately passed together at Liverpool, which I consider as the happiest part of my life. I never before had so much of your company, in an equal space, and with so little interruption. Seven such weeks are preferable to seven years of common time. After so many sheets and quires as I have written to you, I cannot always produce what is new. But the thoughts with which your love inspires me are too interesting to be irksome, though often repeated.

Accept my thanks for your valuable, or invaluable, letter of the 28th of October, which I have just received. I thank you, likewise, for your punctual observance of our stated hour of retirement, which has been seldom omitted on my part; though sometimes hurry of business, or want of opportunity, *have* prevented *me*. But if I slip the appointed minute, no business or company can prevent me from putting up, at least, frequent heart-felt ejaculations on your behalf. I congratulate Mr. B**** upon the agreeable company he had to London. I think the journey was at least as favourable to him as to you. I am sure I would rather have had his seat in the post-chaise than his office, however lucrative or honourable, unless you were annexed to it. But I remember, as friar Bacon's head said, Time was. I have been happy, and hope to be so again.

1754.

Shebar, January 10.

I often lose myself insensibly, in the recollection of our past times; and purchase the recall of the most valued pleasures at the expense of only a transient sigh. I think of our evening walks and retirements, when the setting sun, the trees, the birds, and prospects, have contributed to enrich the scene; though your company was, to me, that which completed and crowned the whole. I reflect with pleasure on some seasons when our thoughts have risen faster than words could give them utterance, and we have surprised the tears silently stealing down our cheeks. What would the gay and fashionable world say to such a representation? They live in too much hurry, and have too little reflection, to understand this elegance of soul, which, under the guise of grief, affords the sincerest pleasure. My own experience would almost lead me to maintain what you, perhaps, will think a paradox—That they who best love, are best qualified to support the

pains and anxieties of absence. Such strains of thought as I have mentioned, yield me more satisfaction than all the gewgaws of the great or wealthy could do. But it will not therefore follow, that people who are indifferent when together, are better pleased when asunder. In the former case, they are soon weary of each other; in the latter they are soon weary of themselves. However, to me, the past and the future afford abundant subject for agreeable musing; and even the present, though not very agreeable in itself, becomes in some measure so, when I consider that I am here for your sake. And I am glad of the opportunity of manifesting that neither difficulties, nor dangers, nor distance, nor time, can abate the sense of what I owe you. However the case may be now, I can remember the time when you could have done very well without me. The first obligation, which was the ground of every other, was entirely on your side; and I still think myself far short of repaying it. Though, if I could cancel that, you have taken care to superadd new ones every succeeding day since.

Rio Junk, January 17.

In the midst of a thousand hurries and avocations, I must steal a few minutes to converse with you. I have been almost wearied to-day with noise, heat, smoke, and business; but when I think of you, the inconvenience is gone. Which of your learned philosophers can define this wonderful, transforming thing called Love, that can infuse a degree of pleasure into trouble and disquiet?

The ship that is to take my packet, is upon the point of sailing. I must wind up all, with fervent prayers, that it may please the Lord, the giver of all good, to preserve us in peace and dependence during the appointed term of our separation; and, in his good hour, to give us a happy meeting; and that we may learn to wait for that time with patience, with thankfulness that our prospects are only delayed, or prorogued, and not wholly cut off, as has been the case with many since we first joined hands. Above all, I pray, that in every scene of life we may prepare for what we know must, sooner or later, take place; that we may believe and act upon the principles of the Gospel, to the glory of our Maker and Redeemer here, and then we shall be happy for ever hereafter, beyond the reach of sorrow or pain, and shall never more know what it is to part.

Rio Sestos, January 21.

Lord Orrery remarks, upon a letter of Pliny (whom, I think, I formerly mentioned) to his wife's aunt, that the examples of delicate conjugal love have been few. He says, "Men cannot, or will not, see the excellencies of their wives. From the day of marriage, the woman lays aside her reserve, and the man his civility. She grows forward and overbearing; he becomes sour and snappish. Or if they appear fond, (as, from the novelty of the state, it sometimes happens,) the grossness of the passion is too nauseous to be named." Whenever I meet with an observation of this kind, it is an unspeakable pleasure to me to reflect, that I can put in an exception to it, in both your name and my own. Were I even assured that the whole time since Pliny and Calphurnia lived (which is more than sixteen hundred years) afforded only forty such happy couples, I should not scruple to include you and myself in the number. And in this consciousness, I find more pleasure than the greatest affluence of wealth could give me. I have enough. I have all in that mutual affection with which it has pleased God to bless us, and without which, the treasures of both the Indies would, to me, be useless and tasteless. I think I have now some right to speak thus; for the experience of nearly four years has convinced me, that either the novelty so much talked of, is not necessary to my satisfaction; or else, which amounts to the same thing, that I find some new cause of endearment in you every day.

Rio Sestos, January 25.

I expected, before I left England, that the present voyage would not prove successful, in point of profit; and I was not mistaken. I shall hardly reach the half of my last year's purchase. I hope the vessel I have bought, to trade after I am gone, may secure the owners' interest; but my own part of the affairs will probably be moderate enough.

If a sigh should escape you on this account, I beg you to recollect yourself, and not indulge a second. Remember, that this failure in dirty money matters is the only abatement we have hitherto met with; and that, in other respects, we have as much the advantage of those who are envied by the world, as we fall short of them in riches. We have blessings which riches cannot purchase, nor compensate for the want of. And I see much cause for thankfulness that things are no worse. We want for nothing at present; and for the future, we may safely rely on the

good Providence that has done so much for us already. Besides, what *I* may get by an indifferent voyage, would, by many, be thought a great sum. We are both sensible that we are too short-sighted to choose well for ourselves, if the choice were allowed us; and, therefore, hope we shall agree to resign our concerns to the disposal of a better wisdom than our own.

When I look back, and reflect upon the difficulties from which I have been relieved, and the advantages I have obtained beyond my former hopes and probabilities, it would be very disingenuous in me to distrsss myself about small matters. Nor need I be over-anxious upon your account, for God can easily provide for us, now we are joined in one interest, as if we had continued separate. If we make our chief application for what chiefly deserves it, we are assured that all inferior good things, in such a measure and manner as is most expedient for us, will surely be added to us. Perhaps we may not be rich—no matter. We are rich in love. We are rich indeed, if the promises and providence of God are our inheritance. And at present, we have every convenience, and I can think of no one thing, really desirable, the greatest sum of money could procure us, which we have not already, unless it were to free us from the necessity of these frequent and long separations.

This thought, indeed, were I to yield to my first emotions, would make me more fond of gold than a miser; though, in every other view, I can despise it. But when I am cool, as my conscience tells me that I am unworthy of so great a blessing, so my experience persuades me that probably I cannot, as yet, be safely trusted with it. Perhaps the event might prove worse than any thing which has hitherto befallen us. I am willing, indeed, to hope it would be otherwise, but my heart is deceitful, and has, more than once, deceived me in this very point. I might grow secure, and gradually neglect the due improvement of such addition to my talents. Nay, such is the unhappy depravity of human nature, that I cannot be sure I might not, in time, be permitted, for my punishment, to forget what I owe to you. It is true, that at this moment of writing, it seems quite as easy for me to forget to speak, or to breathe; but there is an unhappy gradation, often observable in the course of life, by which people, from insensible beginnings, are carried on to things which once they could not have thought of without horror. The first deviation from the paths of duty and peace are scarcely discernible, but they become wider and wider.

I must recall, or soften, this last supposition; for I cannot bear even to suppose it. Can I possibly forget you? I hope not. Surely it would be better for me to be condemned to the mines

for life, than to be deprived of that grateful confidence with which my heart at this instant overflows—that I am yours, and that you are mine. This, I trust, will be among the last reflections I shall be capable of making in this world. But, that it may be so, I wish to acquiesce in whatever methods it shall please God to appoint for the continuance of my affection. Perhaps he sees that these intervals of absence are the best means for preserving me from an evil which I dread more than a dungeon or a galley. If it were otherwise, or whenever I attain strength sufficient to bear the indulgence without abusing it, he can easily put it in our power to live together here till we are meet to be removed to a happy hereafter. The great word *Eternity*, rightly understood, is a cure for every evil, and casts a shade upon the brightest prospects that all on this side the grave can furnish. To us, I hope, it will be an eternity of happiness.

February 2.

Among the many congratulations you will probably receive today, I believe you will think none more sincere or acceptable than mine; though, perhaps, I am in nothing more singular or unfashionable than in my manner of expressing them. The return of your birth-day requires from me an acknowledgment of the same kind as the return of my own. I commemorate both in the same manner. I was up long before the sun this morning, to invoke a blessing upon you, and to pray that this may prove a happy birth-day to you, in my sense of the word. I am writing in a tornado. The elements seem all at war over my head, but I thank God I have peace within; and the storm does not interrupt my thoughts of you.

The day reminds me of that (prophetical, shall I call it) agreement between your mother and mine, when we were in leading-strings; that, if we lived to grow up we should be man and wife. There seems, indeed, nothing extraordinary in such a discourse taking place between intimate friends. But as, afterwards, the intercourse between our families was totally broken off for many years, and renewed by me, in the most contingent, and as the phrase is, accidental manner, when I did not even rightly know your name; add to this, the unusual impression the first sight of you made upon my mind, when we were both so young that I knew not what, or why, I loved: and further, the many difficulties which attended my pursuit, which was begun and carried on for years, against the advice and consent of all your friends, and of all mine; and what seemed the greatest bar of all, against your own inclination likewise;—I say, taking all these circumstances

together, I cannot but think it remarkable that we were so particularly laid out for each other when we were infants. However this may be, I have abundant reason to praise the Lord, that before I had been four years in the world, he should provide for me, in you, the greatest blessing of my life; with which he purposed to enhance and crown all his other mercies to me; and that you might be, in time, as a guardian angel, to preserve me from ruin. I desire to praise him for all the goodness that has followed you, from the hour I am commemorating to this day; for the gracious protection which preserved you for me through your early years; for your health and satisfaction since you have been mine; and for enabling me, thus far, to answer the trust you have reposed in me. And I humbly pray that our affections and engagements may be preserved inviolable between ourselves, and in a proper subordination to what we owe to him, the great Lord of all.

Settera Crue, February 6.

I HAVE calculated, that if all the letters I have sent you since our first parting, in May, 50, were transcribed in order, they would fill one hundred and twenty such sheets as this, on all sides. An eye, less favourable than yours, might find very many faults in so large a collection; but if they have the merit of pleasing you, it pleases me more to have written them, than if I had published so many volumes, to be applauded by the world. I hope I need not be ashamed of them, if they were to fall into other hands. I hope I have, in general, expressed my regard in terms which reason and religion will warrant. I consider our union as a peculiar effect and gift of an indulgent Providence; and, therefore, as a talent to be improved to higher ends, to the promoting his will and service upon earth, and to the assisting each other to prepare for an eternal state, to which a few years, at the furthest, will introduce us. Were these points wholly neglected, however great our satisfaction might be for the present, it would be better never to have seen each other; since the time must soon come, when, of all the endearments of our connexion, nothing will remain but the consciousness how greatly we were favoured, and how we improved the favours we possessed. We shall hereafter have reason to be thankful, even for these frequent separations, if they should conduce to fix these views more effectually in our minds. With such thoughts I endeavour to oppose my impatience to see you. My occasional anxieties, and my indifference to every thing around me, when you are not with me, I compare to the sense of feeling which often costs a person pain; but if he were destitute of it, he would be incapable of pleasure, and little

better than dead. If my heart were not susceptive of love and tenderness, I might escape many a twinge ; but I have not suffered enough to make me envy those whose whole thought and solicitude terminate on their own dear selves.

Settera Crue, February 12.

What I daily acknowledge as the greatest blessing of my life, the return of this day reminds me to notice more particularly. It is the anniversary of our marriage ; a point I had so much at heart ; in which I had long so little probability of succeeding, was so very unworthy of success, and which has so happily answered, I may indeed say exceeded my expectation ;—when I consider all these items together, I am at a loss for words to express my thankfulness to God. For four whole years I have possessed the height of my wishes. I do not except even these necessary intervals of absence ; because I have been enabled to support them as well as I myself can desire ; and because the consciousness of your affection, of which neither absence nor distance can deprive me, affords me a continual feast.

I arose before the sun to pray and give thanks for you, and to beg that you may always find as much satisfaction as you have raised me to ; and that we may both have grace to act answerably to the advantages we have above thousands. If you look round upon those of your acquaintance who have entered the marriage state about the time we did, I believe you will find but few who do not, in some degree, betray a sense of disappointment ; or, who are so entirely satisfied with each other as, I trust, we are. I do not mean to form a comparison with any one in my own favour. Sincerity and tenderness are the chief of my inventory ; but if I ever grow richer in accomplishments, both the praise and the profit ought to be yours ; and who can tell how far a desire to appear deserving of you may, at length, carry me ?

The occasion might now lead me to a more serious strain, and to consider how we may make these blossoms of temporal good bear fruit for eternity ; but for this, I shall at present refer you to what I wrote on your birth day. Let us remember, that in all situations, whether pleased or pained, we are equally advancing towards an unchangeable eternity. It is a part of human happiness, if rightly understood, to know that the very best of it must, ere long, be parted with for something unspeakably better.

Rio Junque, March 1.

I STILL continue in health, and all is well, excepting one late circumstance, which has given me, as you will believe, much concern; but I have now got over it. Not to keep you in suspense, longer than just to prevent surprise, I must inform you that all my schemes in favour of Captain L**** are at an end. I told you, in a former letter, that I had bought a vessel upon the coast, and had given him the command of her. He went from me in good spirits, and with high hopes, but was seized with a fever before he had left me three weeks, which proved fatal to him in about eight days. I have been much affected by this sudden stroke. I have known him long, and believe he had a true regard for me: and it was by my inducement that he came hither. There are other reasons for my concern, which I need not mention to you. But the will of God has taken place, and it is my part to submit.

May we both profit from this recent and awful instance of the vanity and uncertainty of human life, and of all relating to it. A healthy constitution and sprightly temper afford no security from death. How many such have I seen cut off from this coast! And yet I, though supposed by many people to be in a consumption, and not likely to hold out for one voyage, are preserved from year to year? Let us feel the expediency of preparing for a change, which, sooner or later, we must experience. The death of every friend is a warning to the survivors. And yours and mine will, perhaps, by some of our acquaintance who knew how much we loved, and how happy we were in each other, be alleged as a new proof that even those temporal satisfactions which will best abide the test of reflection, are no less frail and transient than any other.

I am in such a scene of confusion and noise, that I hardly know what I write. I only read, or think, as it were, by starts.

At Sea, April 8.

IT is a whole fortnight since I wrote to you, and seems to me much longer. I know you will charge my silence to the hurry of business, and not to neglect. But I can now make you amends, by informing you that I am, once more, clear of the coast of Guinea. I sailed from Shebar yesterday morning. I have left my chief mate, Mr. W****, in possession of the Race-Horse, (the vessel which I purchased for Capt. L.) with about a thousand pounds worth of my cargo, which I could not dispose of in the limited term of my stay on the coast; which I hope will save the

voyage to the owners. As to my own profit, though it may not be so great as might have been expected, I hope it will be sufficient. A safe return to you will make up all deficiencies.

This has been a fatal season to many persons upon the coast. I think I never before heard of so many dead, lost, or destroyed, in one year. But I have been kept in perfect health, and have buried neither White nor Black. Let us praise God for his singular goodness to us, and take encouragement to hope and pray that he will crown this voyage also with a comfortable meeting. Amen.

At Sea, April 18.

A FEW days ago I informed you that I had left Africa, in good health and spirits. It has now pleased God to give me, in my own person, an experience of that uncertainty of all human affairs, which I have so often remarked in the concerns of others.

I have been ill three days of a fever, which, though it is at present attended with no symptoms particularly dangerous, it behooves me to consider may terminate in death. I have endeavoured to compose myself to the summons, if it should so prove. And I hope I may say, I am, in some measure, ready to live or to die, as may be appointed; and that I desire not to choose for myself, in this case, more than in any other. One specious excuse, with which I have often covered my desire of life, was, that I might have opportunity of doing something for the glory of God and the good of my fellow-creatures; that I might not go quite useless out of the world. But, alas! I have so little improved the talents and occasions which have been already afforded me, that I am ashamed to offer this plea any more. My only remaining concern is upon your account; and, even in that, I am in a measure relieved, from the following considerations.

My first and principal consolation is in the hope that we are both under the influence of religious principles, and that you, as well as myself, are persuaded that no trouble or change can befall us by chance. Whenever a separation shall take place, as, if not now, it sooner or later must; it will be by the express act and will of the same wise and good Providence which brought us together at first, has given us so much in each other already, and has continually shielded us, as yet, from the various harms which have been fatal to many of our acquaintance. Further, I consider that *The time is short.* If I go now, in a few years, perhaps much sooner, you will follow me, I hope in the same path, depending wholly on the divine mercy, through faith in the blood and mediation of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, according to the plain, literal

terms of the Gospel. It is in this faith I am now happy. This bears me, in a measure, above my fears and sins, above my sickness, and above the many agreeable views I had formed in my mind upon a happy return to you. May this be your support, your guide, and shield, and I can ask no more for you. Then you will, at last, attain complete and unfading happiness; and we shall meet again, and, perhaps, to join in recollecting the scenes we have been engaged in together while upon earth. Then, probably, we shall clearly see what I now believe, and from which I derive another reason for acquiescence—that as the goodness of God first joined us, so it was his mercy that parted us again; mercy to each, to both of us.

We have, perhaps, been sometimes too happy in each other; to have been always, or longer so, might have betrayed us into a dangerous security. We might have forgotten our present duty and our future destination. It has been too much the case already: I have greatly failed myself, and I have been but a poor example for you. Should it, therefore, please God to make my death the happy occasion of fixing your dependence, hope, and desire upon him alone, surely I can say, Thy will be done. My heart bleeds when I represent to myself the grief with which such an event would overwhelm you. But I know that He can moderate and sanctify it, and give you cause hereafter to say, It was good for you to have been afflicted; and, ere long, the time will come when all tears shall be wiped both from your eyes and mine.

At Sea, April 30.

It has pleased God to give me another reprieve. The fever has left me, and I feel my strength returning. You will congratulate me on my recovery. I thank you. But let us not be too secure. A relapse may soon happen; or twenty unforeseen events may, without sickness, prove equally decisive. I hope I am, in some measure, thankful for the present, and not anxious about the future; for the Lord will appoint what is best for us. My head was much confused when I wrote last; but I shall let it stand as a specimen of my thoughts in the hour of trial. I endeavoured, from the first, to compose my mind for departure hence, if such should be the will of God. And my belief of the Gospel (which I once despised) made me tolerably easy and resigned. When this grand point was, according to my poor attainment, settled, you were the chief, the sole object of my remaining solicitude; and I was desirous of leaving a few lines, while the fever did not render me quite incapable of writing, to certify you in

what manner I was enabled to meet my summons; and to leave you my farewell advice, my blessing, and my thanks. But before I could finish what I intended, the occasion was mercifully removed.

I hope the remembrance of this visitation will be a long and constant benefit to me, and will give me a better sense of the value of health, which I had been favoured with so long, that it seemed almost a thing of course. I bless God for restoring it to me again. If it be his will, I shall be glad to live a little longer, upon many accounts; and among the chief, for your sake. And, oh! may it please him to spare you for me likewise, and to grant that we may again meet in peace! My eyes will not yet allow me to write much.

At Sea, May 16.

I SEND this by a vessel which will probably arrive in England before you can have any news of me from St. Christopher's, to inform you that the Lord has brought us safely within about a week's sail of that island. I have before mentioned the death of Capt. L****, which was, indeed, a trial; but I soon acquiesced, as I ought always, in the will of God. When I consider, It is the Lord, should not I add, Let him do as seemeth him good!

There is, indeed, one trial to which I always stand exposed; should this come, my heart and conscience give me cause to fear that not only moral arguments, but the poor attainments I have made in religion would fail, unless I was immediately strengthened from above. And I humbly trust I shall be, if I am ever called to a scene, which, at present, overpowers my spirits when I but transiently think of it. Yes! God could enable me to resign you also! He has promised strength according to our day; and he is compassionate and faithful.

Since I left Africa, I have been ill of a fever. It was rather violent, but unattended with pains, delirium, or any threatening symptom, and lasted but eight or ten days. Though it was not of the most dangerous species, I thought it right to consider it as a warning to prepare for eternity; and I praise God, the principles upon which I am to rest my hope when in health, did not fail me in sickness. In surrendering myself entirely to the mercy and care of my Lord and Saviour, my hopes so much exceeded my fears, that had it been his will, I seemed contented to give up, even all those prospects which your love and a happy return to you afforded me, (for, at that time, no other temporal prospects had the least weight with me,) and to have died in the midst of

the pathless ocean, at a distance from every friend. If my senses had not failed, I should have died praying that you might be supported, and the stroke sanctified to you. I wrote a letter to you in my illness, (confused as my head was,) when I was not without apprehension that it would be the last service my hand would perform for me: but the Lord has been merciful to me: I am not only still living, but perfectly recovered!

St. Kitt's, Sandy Point, May 30.

We arrived here the 21st instant, and I received your dear obliging letter of the 16th of February.

Before now, I hope you have received an account of my celebration of your birth-day, and the happy consequences of it, the day of our marriage. You say you endeavoured to imitate me on the return of these days, not only in observing them, but in the same manner. My own attempts are so unsuitable to what I could wish, that I cannot suppose yours inferior to them. I hope you will always copy after a more perfect pattern. Our prayers have been thus far answered, and I hope the hour of meeting is not very distant. You will be the more sensible of this mercy, when you receive information of my illness, on the passage, and that my life was, for a day or two, thought very dubious by those about me. My health was restored at sea; but, for want of fresh provisions and proper nourishment, (for I had distributed my stock among the sick seamen before I was taken ill myself,) I continued rather faint and weak; but now, at Mr. G****'s I have not only necessaries, but delicacies, and allow myself more indulgence than usual, with a view of recruiting.

I am glad you think my picture like me. I cannot persuade myself to think so of yours; yet I frequently look at it, and talk to it, because you sat for it; and I can supply the defects of it from my mind, where the dear original is painted, or rather engraved, to the greatest exactness. There I have traces impressed which no pencil could copy; a lively representation, not only of your person, but of your heart.

Now and then I have been constrained to omit our noon-tide appointment; but in general I have observed it with much pleasure, and have found it one of the best alleviations of your absence. At present the time falls out with me about eight in the morning, which is rather inconvenient; but I try to make it up, more or less, through the day; and I believe that one waking hour of my life, since I parted with you, has seldom passed without some breathing of prayer in your behalf.

Sandy Point, June 7.

I HAVE found fewer opportunities of writing than I expected; but, before the close of this month, I hope to be at sea myself, on my way home. Remember what I have formerly written upon such occasions, to prevent your uneasiness; or rather, remember what the Lord has written for your encouragement: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." In all the dangers and difficulties that may affect either of us, our God is ever present. May we learn to sanctify him in our hearts, and to make him our dread, and we need fear nothing. It is my daily earnest prayer that you may find peace and comfort in his promises, which are all yea and amen in Jesus our Redeemer, to them who trust in his atonement and mediation. If we have him on our side, nothing can be against us, so as to separate us from his love. Through him we shall prove more than conquerors. But if we rely on ourselves, or on any thing else short of that only Rock of salvation, we shall be confused and shaken.

The enclosed was written chiefly during my sickness, after leaving the coast. I had some expectation it would have been my last; but God was merciful to me. I desired to live upon your account, and my desire was granted. At present I am in perfect health, and happy in the hope of being soon restored to you again.

Sandy Point, June 13.

I HAVE picked up a valuable acquaintance here, of whom I hope to tell you more soon. I was going to say he is one of my stamp; but he is far beyond me, in all that I most desire. I hope his example and converse will prove to my advantage. We are always together when business will permit: and the last fortnight has been the most pleasant time I have spent during my absence from you. To be from you, is, indeed, an abatement to every pleasure. But I hope I make some advance in submission to the will of God. I have resigned all into his hands, and while separate from you, that is, from all that I hold dear in this world, I perceive in some degree His presence, whose loving kindness is better than life itself.

A vessel arrived to-day from London, which brought many letters, but none for me. It is no matter. I trust in the Lord; and this keeps me from uneasiness. I was more afraid than hurt for want of letters here last voyage; and I hope I shall not be weak enough to grieve again without just grounds.

At Sea, June 24.

I left St. Kitt's the 20th instant, and am now about six hundred miles on my way homewards, in perfect health and peace.

I had a sacramental opportunity while there, on Whitsunday, and was glad to embrace it. The service was, indeed, poorly administered, by a man whose only distinguishing mark of a minister, I believe, was his gown and surplice. But I aimed to look beyond the man, to the Lord; and I hope I received a blessing. You may be sure I thought of you upon the occasion. I hoped that you were engaged that day in the same manner; and I earnestly prayed, as I do daily, that every appointed mean of grace may be made effectual to your present comfort and final salvation. This is the one thing needful; which I ask with solicitude. I am more cool as to our temporal concerns, because I know we are not competent to choose for ourselves; and, therefore, I am content with begging a blessing upon them in general terms; so far as they may most conduce to the promoting his glory and our eternal welfare; resigning the particulars to the wise and merciful disposal of God. And I can say, to his praise, that things never succeeded more to my mind than since I have been taught to aim at this method. May we be interested in the covenant, which is well ordered in all points, and sure; and then, both great mercies, and small mercies (if any mercies could with propriety, be deemed small) will be ours of course. Then we need be anxious about nothing; but, as occasions arise, make known our requests to God; and, if what we ask be really good for us, we shall certainly have it. The apostle's argument upon this head is unanswerable: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him also, freely give us all things? That powerful love which brought down the Most High to assume our nature, to suffer and to die for us, will not permit those who depend on him to want what is really good for them.

At Sea, July 6.

To-morrow will be a feast-day with you, if as I hope, you are well. My thoughts and prayers will attend you at the Lord's table. May you have his presence and blessing in all his ordinances! It is my allotment to be seldom favoured with the benefits of Christian communion, and public ordinances; but, I thank the Lord, I know that He, who is rich in mercy is, in every place, equally nigh to all who call upon him. Neither in the wilds of

Guinea, nor in the pathless ocean, am I wholly without his gracious presence. Yet, were it lawful for me to choose, I would rather be a door keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in splendour at a distance from it. However, it is a great satisfaction to me, that you, who are dear to me as my own heart, have always in your power the privileges which are but now and then permitted to me.

Two very different errors are frequent concerning the Lord's supper. The first is, of those who keep away because, as they say, they are unworthy. If they mean, that they are determined to persist in those courses which are directly contrary to the design of our Redeemer's life and death, they certainly have no business at his table: but, alas! what will they do if death should summon them, in this hardened disposition, to his tribunal? But with respect to those who mourn for their sins, and strive, and pray against them, it is an artifice of the tempter to deter them from the Lord's table, because they are sinners; when it is a sure and glorious truth, that sinners are the very persons invited. The whole need not a physician, but the sick. All the ordinances, and particularly this, are designed to strengthen the weak, to confirm the doubtful, and to raise them that are fallen. Unbelief and a legal temper dishonour the Gospel, and disquiet the soul; and, indeed the objection is founded in pride; for they own, that if they were better, as it is called, they would readily attend. But it is best for us to renounce all seeming good in ourselves, and as helpless, worthless sinners, to rely wholly on the mercy of God, in Jesus Christ.

There is an opposite error. Many rush upon this sacrament as though it were a mere ceremony, or civil institution to qualify for an office; or a sponge to wipe off their past offences, that they may begin a new score. They have no sense of the evil of sin, and therefore, cannot know their need of a Saviour. But they presume that God is merciful, and are quieted. He is, indeed, merciful beyond our conception, and he has shown himself so in the method of reconciliation; but he has declared the way in which he will show mercy, and there is no other. For a person to partake of that bread, and of that cup, which exhibit to us the sorrows and sufferings of the son of God for our sins, and yet wilfully to continue in the practice of those sins, which it cost him all his agonies in the garden, and upon the cross, to expiate, is, as much as in him lies, to crucify the Son of God afresh, and to put him to open shame.

At Sea, July 13.

Of all the authors I have read, who have occasionally treated of a married life, and of the inadvertencies, on both sides, by which it is too often rendered unhappy, I do not remember one who has touched upon the greatest evil of all, I mean our wretched propensity to lay the foundation of our proposed happiness independent of God. If we are happy in a mutual affection when we set out, we are too apt to think that nothing more is wanting; and to suppose our own prudence and good judgment sufficient to carry us on to the end. But that it is not so, in fact, we have daily proof, from the example of numbers, who, notwithstanding a sincere regard to each other at first, and the advantages of good sense, and good temper, in general, yet, by some hidden causes, gradually become cool and indifferent, and at length burdensome, perhaps hateful to each other. This event is often noticed, and excites surprise, because few can properly account for it. But I see few marriages commenced which give me hope of a more favourable issue.

It is an undoubted truth, that the Most High God, who is ever present with and over his creatures, is the author and giver of all that is agreeable or comfortable to us in this world. We cannot be either easy in ourselves, or acceptable to others, but by his favour; and, therefore, when we presume to use his creature-comforts without consulting and acknowledging him in them, his honour is concerned to disappoint us. Dreaming of sure satisfaction in the prosecution or enjoyment of our own desires, we do but imitate the builders of Babel, who said, Go to, let us build a tower, to get ourselves a name. So we, too often, when circumstances smile upon us, vainly think of securing happiness upon earth: a sensual happiness, and on an earth that stands accursed and subject to vanity for our sins. In every state and scene of life there are instances of this folly; but, perhaps, it is in no one more insinuating and plausible, than in the commencement of marriage between those whose hearts are united. But, alas! God looks down upon such short-sighted projectors as he did upon those of old. He pours contempt upon their designs; he divides their language; he permits separate views and interests to rise in their minds; their fair scheme of happiness degenerates into confusion; and they are left under the reproach of having begun to build what they will never be able to finish. This is the true cause of half the unhappiness complained of and observed among those who come together by their own consent. Not for want of goodwill at first, nor for want of any necessary qualification in themselves; but because, neglecting to own and to seek God in their

concerns, he has refused them that blessing without which no union can subsist.

You will not ask me how we set out, and in what manner our happy connexion has been conducted. But perhaps you will see much reason to ask (I am sure I do) why we have succeeded so much better than others? and why we, unlike the most of our acquaintance, have preserved our regard unabated, and all our obligations fresh upon our mind, into the middle of our fifth year? I cannot pretend that it is owing to my being duly dependent, and humble, in ascribing all my blessings to the Lord; or to my having enjoyed them with an eye to his glory. Alas! I have given way to the evils which I knew I ought to avoid, and have neglected the good to which my conscience called me. But it is because the Lord, in all his dealings with me, has been wonderfully, singularly merciful and favourable. By his grace he brought me from a state of apostasy, to the knowledge of his Gospel; and by his good providence, he has no less distinguished me in temporals. He brought me, as I may say, out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; from slavery and famine on the coast of Africa, into my present easy situation. And he brought me from the most abandoned scenes of profligacy, when I was sunk into a complacency with the vilest wretches, to make me happy in the possession of your heart and person. And thus he has continued to me, in your love and its endearing consequences, all that I hold valuable in life for so many years; though I have not endeavoured, in the manner I ought, to deserve you for one whole day. Often the consciousness of my disingenuous behaviour has made my heart tremble upon your account. I have feared lest you should be snatched away, for my punishment. But the Lord is God, and not man. As in a thousand instances, so particularly in this, I may well say, He has not dealt with me according to my sins, nor rewarded me after my iniquities. He has neither separated us by death, nor involved us in heavy afflictions, nor suffered our affections to fail. Let us praise him for these three articles, for there is scarcely one couple in a thousand that is favoured with them all for any equal space of time.

Mr. Addison has treated, with propriety, on the want of complaisance, the improper freedoms, and several other failings, which, though seemingly of no great immediate importance themselves, may in time, give rise to serious and abiding disgusts. The faults which he mentions are to be guarded against; but to attend to these only will not be sufficient. Philosophy and reasoning have their use; but religion alone can teach us how to use the good things of this world without abusing them; and to make our earthly comforts blessings indeed, by improving them to a

further view; by tracing them, as streams, to their fountain; by extending our views, from time to eternity; and making our mutual affection a mean of raising our desires to the great Lord of all. But herein, alas! I have greatly failed hitherto. And perhaps this is the reason why I am so long and so often separated from you. I now see that I may number it among my great mercies, that I was not permitted to remain always at home with you. Perhaps, by this time, I might have been hardened into an entire neglect of my duty to God, and my most essential duty to you; but by being forced to leave you, again and again, I have had opportunity and leisure for reflection, and, I would hope, at length, for repentance. You have been much mistaken in your opinion of me. Your kind partiality has thought me very good, when, indeed, I have been very bad; very insensible and ungrateful, not only to God but even to you. I have not properly answered the trust you have reposed in me; but I hope I shall be enabled to amend.

You say you sometimes show my letters. Though most of them are in an unfashionable strain, I am not very solicitous who may see them. I write from my heart; from a heart that is not ashamed (excepting as I have acknowledged above) in any thing relating to you; a heart that hardly beats, but in concert to some earnest wish for your welfare; a heart that always feels the smallest instance of your kindness; a heart that would give up every pleasure this world can afford, rather than lose the joy it feels in being yours, and that you own an interest in it; a heart that would welcome any temporal troubles that might be a mean of final good to you. Thus far I can go. There was a time when I could have gone further. Do not think my love impaired because I now desire to stop here. There was a time (what a mercy that the Lord did not tear my idol from me!) when you had that place in my heart which is only due to Him, and I regarded you as my chief good. But I hope that time is past: and never did I wish so earnestly for the first proofs of your affection, as I do now that you may be enabled to restrain it within due bounds; and that your regard may not prevent you from considering me as a frail, poor, mutable creature, unable of myself to procure you any real good, or to shield you from the smallest evil. Oh, may we adore Him, who provideth us for each other; who brought us together, and has spared us so long! May we love each other till death, yea, I hope, in a future state, beyond death! And, in order to this, may we, in the first place, love him with all our heart, and soul, and strength, who first loved us, and gave himself for us, to renew our forfeited title to the good things of both worlds, and to wash us from our sins in his own blood. This was love indeed!

Where were the sensibility and ingenuousness of spirit which we sometimes think we possess, that this unspeakable lover of souls has been no more noticed, no more admired and beloved, by us hitherto ? Lord, make us partakers of thy divine nature, for thou art love !

At Sea, July 27.

You will observe, I have of late made an alteration in my post-days. Instead of a few lines two or three times a week, I now write a whole sheet every Saturday; and in the choice of a subject, I have an eye to the service of the following day. Thus I indulge my inclination in writing to you, without breaking the rule I have for some time past, prescribed to myself; the forenoon of Saturday I allow for relaxation; but when I have dined, if no necessary business prevents me, I endeavour to abstract my mind from worldly concerns, and to prepare for the approaching Sabbath.

I now mean to give you some account how I pass a Sea-Sunday, when I am favoured with a tolerable frame of mind, and am enabled, by the grace of God, to obtain some tolereble mastery over the encumbrances of the flesh and the world, which in my best hours, are too prevalent with me.

My evening devotions when opportunity permits, commence about six o'clock, the week and the month round; and I am, sometimes, engaged a full hour or more in prayer and praise, without any remarkable weariness or repetition. *You* furnish me with much subject for both. On a Saturday evening, in particular, I beg a blessing upon your Sunday, upon your public worship and retirement. And as I know that where you are, you are unavoidably exposed to trifling company, to whom all days are alike, I pray that you may be shielded from their evil influence. I have likewise to pray for others; for our friends; for many of them by name, and according to the knowledge I have of their circumstances; and extend my petitions to the general state of the world, that they who are strangers to the Gospel, in which I have found so much peace, may be brought to the knowledge of it; and that they who neglect and despise it, as I once did, may, like me, obtain mercy. When these, and other points, are gone over, and my praises offered for our temporal and spiritual blessings, and likewise my repeated confessions of the sins of my childhood, youth, and advanced years, as they occur to my remembrance, you will not wonder that an hour is elapsed. The remainder of the evening I pass in ruminating on the mercies of the preceding

week, the subjects of my reading, or whatever I can pick useful self-conference from.

I usually rise at four on a Sunday morning. My first employ is to beg a blessing upon the day for us both; for all who, like you, are preparing to wait upon God in public, and for all who, like myself, are, for a time, excluded from that privilege. To this succeeds a serious walk upon deck. Then I read two or three select chapters. At breakfast, I eat and drink more than I talk; for I have no one here to join in such conversation as I should then choose. At the hour of your going to church, I attend you in my mind with another prayer; and at eleven o'clock the ship's bell rings my own little congregation about me. To them I read the morning service, according to the Liturgy. Then I walk the deck, and attend my observation, as we call it; that is, to know by the sun, (if it shines,) at noon, the latitude the ship is in. Then comes dinner. In the afternoon I frequently take a nap for half an hour; if not, I read, or write in a book I keep for that purpose. I wait upon you again to church in the afternoon, and convene my ship's company, as in the morning. At four o'clock I drink tea, which recruits my spirits for the evening. Then another Scripture lesson, and a walk, brings six o'clock, which, I have told you, is my hour for stated prayer. I remember you then again, in the most particular manner; and, in trust that you are still preserved in safety for me, I endeavour to praise the Lord for his goodness so long vouchsafed to us.

But, alas! when I look back upon a day spent in this manner, I cannot express how much I have to mourn over, and be ashamed of, at night. Oh! the wanderings and faintness of my prayers; the distraction of my thoughts; the coldness of my heart, and the secret workings of pride, which debase and corrupt my best services. In short, every thought is wrong. But I remember that I am not under the law, but under grace. I rely on the promised mediation of my Saviour, renounce my own poor performances and implore mercy, in his name and for his sake only, and that sets all to rights. I need no one to pronunce an absolution to me; I can tell myself that my sins are forgiven me, because I know in whom I have believed. This leads me to praise and adore Him, that I was born in an age and country favoured with the light of the Gospel; when there are millions of my species who have neither the means of grace nor the hope of glory; and further, that I have been called out from the unhappy apostasy, and licentiousness, and misery, into which I had plunged myself; when many thousands, who never offended to the degree I have, are either suffered to go on, from bad to worse, till there is no hope, or are cut off by a stroke, and sink into endless misery in a thoughtless moment! Lord, not unto me, but unto Thee be the praise. It was wholly

the effect of thy grace ; for thou wouldest be found of me when I had not the least inclination to seek thee !

Though I have given you this account, chiefly of my passing a Sunday, it will, in the main, serve for the history of any day in any week, since I left St. Christopher's. It is thus I am enabled, ardently as I love you, to support your absence without impatience ; though a re-union to you, such as our two former, includes all I can wish as to temporals. And, I trust, he who has brought me safely over two thirds of the ocean that was lately between us, will do the rest in his own good hour. And, in the mean while, blessed be his name, my time does not hang heavy upon my hands. I trust *you* choose him for your portion also. Thus we shall bear separation better, and be more happy when together, than formerly. And when we are called finally to part, (as, sooner or later, we must,) He will strengthen us according to the day of our trouble, and will assuredly unite us again to unspeakable advantage, and place us beyond the reach of every trial and every evil.

At Sea, August 3.

If our reckonings are right, I am now within a day's sail of Ireland ; and I may hope (if the fair wind continues) to see Liverpool within a week. My passage thus far, like all the passages I have made since you have owned an interest in me, has been remarkably exempted from disagreeable events and apparent dangers. As I hope I shall not have occasion to send you another weekly sheet before I see you, I would employ this on a closing invitation, to join with me in praising the great Author of all good for his numerous and repeated mercies and blessings vouchsafed to us both ; and the rather at present, as this day will conclude another year of my life. How much reason have I to say, with David, " O Lord, thou crownest the year with thy goodness."

We are never in a better disposition to ask, and obtain, further favours from the Lord, than when our hearts are impressed with a grateful sense of those we have already received. *We* have, indeed, reason to praise him above many ; for his dispensations to us have been singularly favourable. His goodness has been manifested from the first moments of our life ; yea, still more early, from the circumstances of our birth. It was by the ordination of his kind providence, that we were born in an age and land of light and liberty, and not among the millions who have no knowledge of the means of grace, or of the hope of glory ; nor among the multitudes who are trained up, from their cradles, to substitute superstition for religion. But I shall defer speaking of

spiritual mercies till I have said something of our temporal blessings.

Perhaps we have sometimes been tempted to think that, because we do not possess titles and estates, and are not of high distinction and estimation in the world, we have received nothing extraordinary; but two reflections will, I hope, suffice to correct this mistake.

Let us, in the first place, think of the miseries we know or observe in the world. How many are crippled or maimed in their bodies, or disordered in their minds? How many, at this minute, are nearly perishing through extreme want of the common necessaries of life? How many are chained to their beds by sickness and excruciating pains, and can find no ease by day or by night? not to insist on the more deplorable case of those who are suffering the agonies of a wounded spirit, or a terrified conscience. Let us reflect on the miseries and outrages which the scourge of war brings upon cities, provinces, and whole nations. Or, if those scenes are two shocking to dwell upon, it will suffice to take the estimate much lower. Let us look round us at home, amongst our own acquaintance, or, at furthest, within the bounds of the newspapers. How many fatherless—how many widows, do we hear of? How many, from happy prospects, rendered suddenly miserable by what we call casualties? Take these things together, and let us ask our consciences if a continued exemption from such a variety of evils, and a constant supply of the many wants we have in common with others, are not favours which we enjoy, and which are afforded, comparatively to few?

But further; let us, in the second place, turn our eyes to those who are placed in the smoother walks of life, whom customary speech calls the *happy*. Run over what you know of those who are most noticed for personal qualifications, for their riches, honours, or the variety of their means and modes of pleasure: and then let us ask ourselves, if there is any one amongst all these with whom we would be content to change in all points? If we should not accept such a proposal, as surely we should not, (I answer for you, no less confidently than for myself,) it follows, evidently, that we have more to be thankful for (our own partial selves being judges) than many of those whom, perhaps, we have been disposed to envy; and if so, it is equally plain that there are no two persons upon the face of the earth more indebted to an indulgent Providence than ourselves.

If I mention particulars, I must begin with what I have most at heart, our mutual, happy affection. In this, at least, we are rich; and this is a kind of wealth, with which gold and silver will bear no comparison; nor would many cart-loads of them purchase a single grain of so great a blessing. But let us not ascribe this to

ourselves. How manifest, how powerful and marvellous, was the hand of God in bringing us together? For myself, I have reason to say, (as you well know,) that never was attempt of the kind successful under greater improbabilities; and yet, so peculiar was our turn, that had we missed each other, perhaps there was not one of each sex in the kingdom that could have made us so entirely happy. Then, after marriage, it was not impossible for us, more than others, to decline into that satiety and indifference so much complained of, and so often observed. If we had sunk no lower than into a cold esteem, a sort of mechanical good-will, the world might have judged charitably that we were well matched; but we could not have been able to write, to speak, to look, and to feel, as we do now. But further, when all that we do possess was granted, we might still have been unhappy without the especial protection of God. We were liable to sickness, death, and a variety of distresses, which, if they had not impaired our love, would have made it productive of more pain than pleasure. But, in this respect, we have been no less distinguished than in the rest. I can give you no idea of the many evils and dangers which surrounded me in my last two voyages; nor can I recount how many fell beside me, and at my right hand, who had equal prospects, better constitutions, and perhaps superior skill. But this was not all, nor even half; for I found, upon my return, that my dearest M*** was preserved to me, and had always the satisfaction to meet you in the most agreeable manner I could wish. And I have been conducted towards you thus far in safety the third time, and my hopes still flourish.

To the prime article, what we are to each other, many may be added, which, though subordinate, are very valuable. The union and harmony of every branch of our family; an easy, sufficient way of life, creditable and decent, if not splendid. But want of room prevents me from enlarging on these items, and from the mention of several more; for I am not willing to fill the sheet with what relates merely to this transitory state. The blessings I have recounted are, in themselves, great; but when compared with the views and hopes revealed to us by the Gospel, they sink at once in their importance, and become, any further than subservient to our spiritual interest, less than nothing, and vanity. All advantages of this kind might have been permitted us for the term of a frail life, and yet we might have lived and died strangers to God, and to true peace; nay, we certainly should, had we been left to ourselves.

Let us, therefore, praise the mercy and goodness of God, for conveying to us all his gifts in the channel of redeeming love; and for leading us to build our hopes upon the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by being made a curse for us, and dying

upon the cross, has taken out that curse and evil which the transgression of our first parents had entailed upon the whole lower creation. Let us praise the Lord, that, though he has blessed us with so much of our heart's desire, he has enabled us to hope that he has not appointed us all our portion of good in this life. Let us rejoice, not merely in our comforts upon earth, but rather in the trust we have that our names are written in heaven. Let us receive our Lord's gifts with thankfulness, and improve them to his service; and may they be doubly welcome to us, as tokens of his love, and earnests of his further gracious designs in our favour. And, oh! may the consciousness of our past neglect, and our unsuitable returns for all his benefits, inspire us with redoubled diligence and care for the future, and engage us in a humble and daily application to our great Surety, who has undertaken to pay *all* our debts. And may you, my dearest M***, appear to-morrow at his table with these views, acknowledging that our talents have been all of his bounty, and the abuse of them, yours and mine, and all that we can properly call our own. May your confessions end in peace, and your sorrow terminate in joy, in receiving the pledges of his dying love. You will remember me, and I shall endeavour to be with you in spirit; and I trust, on the next sacrament day, I shall accompany you in person; and before that time, I hope we shall be permitted, with one heart and one voice, to praise the Lord, our light, and strength, and salvation, who holds our souls in peace, and suffers not our feet to be moved. O Lord, thou hast dealt wonderfully with us; therefore will we exalt thy glorious name!

I am unalterably yours.

Liverpool, August 11.

My last just informed you of my arrival here in health and peace. I can tell you little more at present. I lived almost without sleep nearly a week before we came in, and my head and thoughts are not yet quite settled.

It is not at present determined, whether you or I must remove from where we are; if you receive this without a postscript, you may expect me. I shall be clear of my ship African in two days. I have quitted her because she is such a heavy sailer. But there is another that was born (launched) the same day with her, which I may have if I please, and probably I shall not refuse her, though I know not what to do with her at present. My judgment tells me that it would be better to sail six months hence, and I have almost induced Mr. M**** to think as I do. And yet I fear he suspects that I start objections, that I may have the more time to

pass with you. I wish he could know the peculiar turn of my love, and he would fully acquit me of such a charge. It is true, indeed, were I master of a small independency, though but a small one, I should glory in avowing, that nothing which the mercenary world calls advantage—not a large heap of yellow counters—should bribe me to the necessity of being so long and so far from my dearest M***. For when I consider myself only, I know and feel that the price of a kingdom would poorly pay me for your absence. But when I think of you as unprovided for, and liable to I know not what, if any thing should befall me; and still more, that your desire of making me happy was the occasion of your being in this precarious state; I almost grudge every hour in which I am not some way engaged for your interest. I should be ashamed to be long at home when your concerns require me abroad. However, I am to submit every thing to the disposal of that all-wise Providence on which I am permitted to depend, and by which I never was, nor can be disappointed. I have many reasons for desiring a little time with you, if it will suit my business; if otherwise, I have one reason against it that outweights them all—the sense of what I owe to you. I considered before we married, what must be the consequence on my side; I joyfully accepted the terms with all disadvantages; and I thank God, I never yet repented or thought, for a moment, that I could either bear, or forbear, too much, while you were my motive and reward.

If you ask how I pass my time here? I answer, that if an assemblage of all I can wish for satisfy me, without your company I need not set my foot out of Liverpool; yet if I did not keep a strict watch over my heart, I should be uneasy and impatient amidst all; and more so here than elsewhere, for every thing I see reminds me that you were with me last year.

Warrington, August 18.

I AM thus far on my return from Manchester, and thus far on my way from Liverpool to London, and hope to be with you on Friday. You must prepare for another journey, for I promised to return within a month. Mr. M****, in his usual manner, talks of having the ship at sea in six weeks; but I believe it will be near twelve before all is ready. I have procured for my new ship, the name of the Bee; both for shortness and significancy. I could comment a good while upon the word Bee, and talk about the sting and the honey; but I forbear, as we hope so soon to meet.

I make this a day of rest; for I think it not right to travel on a Sunday, without a more urgent necessity than I can plead at present. But it has been a cold, unfruitful day. It must be so at times, while I am encumbered with the world and the flesh. But I am something enlivened by the receipt of yours of the fourteenth. Like Hezekiah, I spread the letter before the Lord. But my circumstances are very different from his: instead of complaining of enemies, my joyful errand to his mercy seat is to praise him for his goodness; for the confirmation of your health and peace, and for the happy prospect of being soon with you.

The last week I was at sea, was no less stormy with us than with you; and, besides, the many invisible and unheeded evils from which we were preserved, we were twice in imminent, apparent danger; and never more so than for two or three hours before we arrived at Liverpool. Let these instances confirm you in the persuasion that storms and calms are equally safe to those who trust in the God of the sea and the dry land. He sometimes gives me a view of impending harm, to teach me that I am insufficient to my own safety. But when deliverance is seasonable and necessary, I find it always at hand. Had the wind and weather, during the whole passage, been at my own choice, I could not have gained my port in a more satisfactory manner, or in a better hour than I did. I had the pleasure of returning thanks in all the churches for an African voyage performed without any disaster, or the loss of a single man, (for Captain L**** was fixed in another vessel some time before his death.) This was much noticed, and spoken of, in the town; and I believe it is the first instance of the kind.

No part of your letter pleases me so much as that where you tell me you can sincerely say, *The will of the Lord be done.* To find us both proficients, in this temper, would rejoice me more than the expectation of passing many winters at home; and yet I think I should not undervalue a single hour of your company. But I consider that in a few winters and summers more, all our endeared hours will be as though they had never been; but the effects and consequences of our temporary connexion will abide for ever.

N. B. When I returned to Liverpool, and was upon the point of sailing in the Bee, it pleased God to stop me by illness. By the advice of the physicians, I resigned the command of the ship; and was thus unexpectedly freed from the disagreeable, and (as I now see it) abominable employment and traffic in which I had been engaged. So that my marine correspondence ends here.

My first attack was a violent fit, which threatened immediate death, and left me no signs of life but breathing for about an hour. I soon grew better; but the sudden stroke made such an impression upon my dear wife, that it cost her more than a twelvemonth's severe illness. My friend, Mr. M****, procured me a place in the Custom-house; and when I was constrained to return to take possession of my office, she had been but a few days a little revived from a state in which the physicians had given up all hope of her recoverey. The second series of my letters were written while I was tide-surveyor of the port of Liverpool.

Letters to a Wife.

WRITTEN IN ENGLAND,

FROM 1755 TO 1785.

Thou dost but take the dying lamp away,
To bless me with thine own unclouded day.

MRS. ROWE.

Behold I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes, with a stroke; yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down.—EZEK. xxiv. 16.

LETTERS TO A WIFE.

1755.

WHILE RESIDENT AT LIVERPOOL.

Towcester, August 12.

My Dearest,

Before this reaches you, your brother will have told you how easy and composed he left me. Indeed, I wonder at myself. But the Lord has been very gracious to me, and fulfills his promise of giving me strength according to my day. My mind is not distressed. My companions in the coach are civil and agreeable, in their way; but I had rather have been alone; for to commune with God and my own heart, would be much more pleasing than the empty amusing chit-chat I am engaged in at present.

I was enabled, this morning, to commend you to the Lord's blessing with much comfort. And I have a cheerful hope that He will raise you up in due time; and that we shall again have a happy and thankful meeting. Till then, let us attend to *present* duty, and keep close to him by humble prayer, and a renewed dependence upon the blood of Jesus. Let us, while the rod is upon us, inquire into the meaning of it, and hear his voice by it: let us bow to his chastisement, and acknowledge that we have rebelled against Him, and that he afflicts us far less than our iniquities have deserved. Then we may be assured that though He cause grief, He will have compassion; and will not only deliver us, but give us to see, and to say, that it was good for us to have been in trouble. I esteem it a mercy that you found some mitigation of your pain, and some symptoms of amendment, before I left you. But had I been called away in the hour of your greatest extremity, I ought to have relied on the Lord's goodness, and to have been resigned to his will. But, alas! how weak is my faith!

I am in perfect health, and not uneasy for you. To be sure I think of you continually, but my trust in God bears me up. I shall endeavour to write by every post, but if one should pass me upon the road, I hope you will not be anxious. The Lord is my guard and my guide.

Litchfield, August 13.

THUS far I am brought in safety, and am not willing to trust the post any further, and therefore must be brief. I met Mr. T**** at Daventry, and requested him to send you word how cheerful he found me; fearing you would scarcely believe my own report, unless I had some one to vouch for me. I shall be glad to hear a like account of you, but I know who has the care of you, and what good ground I have to trust him. I hope my first news will be, that your recovery is advancing. Many prayers to this effect I have offered, and am every hour adding to the number, though not with the solemnity I could wish. For we have hitherto found so much company upon the road, and have come in so late, that I have not had the opportunity of a single retired room. This is the only inconvenience I have met with. But I know I do not serve a hard master. I pray to Him who can hear the breathings of my thoughts, when in the midst of company, and who is more ready to hear than I am to ask.

I hope you, my dearest, will continue waiting for Him, for from Him only our help can come. Pray for a praying spirit; lay all your hopes and all your fears before Him. In this way, and in no other peace and comfort will be surely found: I recommend you to his blessing, and remain, beyond expression,

Yours.

Liverpool, August 15.

I CANNOT write much to-night, but I must tell you, in a few words, all is well. I have met with the usual kind reception from our dear friends—have done my business at the Custom-House, and received many congratulations. I have a holiday till Monday, and shall then enter upon my office. As there are two surveyors, and I shall be upon the river only every other week, the place is likely to afford me liesure, which, in its turn, will be as welcome to me as money. Well: since the Lord has given me so many blessings, shall I not trust him throughout? Yes, I thank him, I hope I am warranted to say, I can, and do. My thoughts were much interrupted while in the coach; but I had a pleasant ride indeed from Warrington hither, and was led to wonder at my many mercies, and to resign both you and myself into the hands of God, with much satisfaction.

I have received your brother's letter, and I thank him for his punctuality. As the Lord is pleased to give you intervals of ease and sleep, so I know he can remove all your pains by a word; and I trust he will in the best season. May he, at present, sanctify his hand, to the increasing of our faith and patience. Amen!

Liverpool, August 20.

I HAVE received your sister's obliging letter, with your own dear name, in your own dear hand, at the bottom. A welcome sight! May I be thankful!

I entered upon business yesterday. I find my duty is to attend the tides one week, and to visit the ships that arrive, and such as are in the river; and the other week to inspect the vessels in the docks, and thus, alternately, the year round. The latter is little more than a sinecure, but the former requires pretty constant attendance, both by day and night. I have a good office, with fire and candle, fifty or sixty people under my direction, with a handsome six-oared boat and a coxswain, to row me about in form. Mr. W**** went with me on my first cruise down to the Rock. We saw a vessel, and wandered upon the hills, till she came in. I then went on board, and performed my office with all due gravity. And had it not been my business, the whole might have passed for a party of pleasure.

To-day the wind blows hard; but you need not be uneasy about me at such times. For though my department will lead me to be much upon the river, it is at my option to embark or not, as I find the weather. I like my station, and shall soon be master of it. Remember that I am in the path of duty, and under the protection of Him whom the winds and seas obey.

I perceive that you have thoughts of removing to Eltham. I pray the Lord to direct you when and where to go; and that his presence may be with you, to preserve you from being hurt by unsuitable company, so as to forget the vows you have offered in the time of your trouble. I hope our late trial will be sanctified to us, and that while we live we may have cause to say, that God is gracious and merciful even in afflicting us. If your health should be fully restored, let us remember it is but a reprieve. We must experience, sooner or later, another and a final visitation, to put an end to all our views which are bounded with the term of this frail life. Happy shall we be, if, when that hour arrives, we shall be found ready, and enabled by faith in our Redeemer, to withstand and overcome the shock of the last enemy, death. I hope and trust we are yet spared, that we may recover our strength before we go hence, and are no more seen. I hope, if the Lord is pleased to conduct you safely to me, and to give us a house of our own, we shall act, in some measure, suitable to our obligations, for so many deliverances and restorations as we have known; and learn to trust in his providence, and no more offend him by our unbelieving fears. I hope in a few more posts to have the pleasure of a letter of your own writing. But do not

attempt it too soon. It is not necessary to make me easy. For I have been helped to trust you to the Lord's care, with few intervals of anxiety since I left you.

Liverpool, August 24.

The good hand of God has brought me safely through a bustling, tempestuous week. I am to keep watch to-night till about two o'clock. But do not pity me. I shall be most of the time beside a good fire, reading, writing, and, at intervals, praying for you and myself. I hear you are still upon the recovery, for which I wish to be thankful. But, alas! how much am I otherwise! I seem almost to forget the bitter time we both have lately known, and to be nearly impatient to see you here. But do not think me uneasy; I assure you I am not. But I cannot help feeling that you are not with me. To-morrow my week of rest begins; then some of my friends may expect to hear from me. Of late I have only had leisure to write to you. Be cheerful and dependent. Make use of means prescribed for restoring your health, but do not rest in them. The blessing must be from the great Physician. To him let us apply for it; and ascribe to him all the praise, if we obtain relief.

Liverpool, August 26.

I hope I am not capable of undervaluing any of your former letters, but surely this now in my hand is the most pleasing and welcome one I ever received. May the Lord make me thankful that you are again able to hold a pen. Your brother repeatedly amused me with hopes of your recovery, when, as I now find, you were in the greatest pain and danger. There is something so close and pertinent in the little you have written, that I am filled with joy. I have hardly known, you allow, till now, that you were enabled to pray. We may praise God for that pain or sickness, however severe, which teaches us in good earnest to call upon Him. You have been in trouble, you called upon him, and he has delivered you according to his word. What shall we render to Him for all his mercies! Alas, we are poor, and can render nothing of our own. But he will not despise the efforts of a thankful heart. I wish you well to Eltham. I fear the company there will not be quite suitable to the present state of your mind. But I trust you will keep a strict guard over yourself, and redouble your prayers to the God of all grace, to preserve you from evil. Secure seasons for retirement, and let not the world break in upon

you, till you have daily committed and dedicated yourself to Him who has raised you from the borders of the grave.

Liverpool, September 2.

THE strain of your letters now makes me think light of our temporary separation. Be not afraid, only believe. The Lord Jesus, whom you need and seek, invites you, and has declared, Whosoever cometh I will in no wise cast out. By nature, we all dislike his Gospel, and see no excellence in his person that we should desire him; if this is not your disposition at present, the change already wrought is his work; and He is not like the unwise, inconsiderate builder: what he begins, he is both able and willing to finish. You have cause to lament the backwardness and hardness of your heart, (the Lord only knows how hard and backward mine is,) but let not this cast you down: He can take away the heart of stone. Nor think it strange if now, upon your setting your hand to the plough, the enemy should assault and trouble you. He will, if permitted, tempt you to suspect the reality of all that you have experienced; he will set your sins in order before you, and persuade you, if possible, to look into yourself for qualifications and conditions of acceptance. But answer him from the word of God, and tell him that he is a liar, and the father of it. Christ not only has mercy for the unworthy, the ungrateful, and perishing sinner, who cannot offer one plea (as from himself) why he should be spared; but it was purposely for those who answer to this character, that he came into the world to die, that He might save them to the uttermost. He gives qualifications indeed, but he requires none from us. Perhaps this enemy will quote Scripture against you, and press such texts upon your mind as might lead you to form hard conclusions against yourself. But you will bear this, if you consider that he had the impudence to assail our Lord himself in this manner, Matth. iv. This Jesus whom you seek, was in all points tempted and afflicted (sin excepted) like unto us. He has tasted suffering and anguish of mind, as well as death, for all his followers. Therefore He is a High Priest who can have compassion upon our infirmities, and is able to succour them that are tempted, and knows what temptations mean.

Go on, my dearest; I trust you are in the right way; wait patiently upon the Lord. Cast not away the confidence you express in his mercy, for in keeping it you will find a great reward. Greater is He that is with us, than he that is in the world. Changes you must expect. The Christian life is a warfare; and

though the Captain of our salvation, by conquering for us, has secured us the final victory, we may be sorely pinched, and sometimes wounded, while on the field of battle; but there is healing balm provided, and he will be always near to apply it. There may be fightings without and fears within; but He is faithful that has promised, who also will do it.

I have been so affected and engaged by the former part of your letter, that I have not time to answer the other particulars. It is my boarding week again, and the weather is bad. But fear not for me; I am in safe hands.

Liverpool, September 5.

On the stormy night you mention, I was safe in bed. I have been but once upon the river this week. The wind blew very hard then, it is true; but I was in no danger. I hope a little practice will teach you to trust me with equal ease, at all times, and in all places, where my duty calls me.

When you come hither, you will perhaps be more thankful for my being settled on shore, from what you will observe of the anxiety of those who have husbands, or parents, or children at sea, in the way of the approaching war. From such fears you will now be exempted; you will no more have to wait eight or ten months in suspense. When I think of my settlement here, and the manner of it, I see the appointment of Providence so good and gracious, and such a plain answer to my poor prayers, that I cannot but wonder and adore. I think I have not yet told you that my immediate predecessor in office, Mr. C****, had not the least intention of resigning his place on the occasion of his father's death; though such a report was spread about the town, without his knowledge, or rather in defiance of all he could say to contradict it. Yet to this false report I owe my situation. For it put Mr. M**** upon an application to Mr. S****, the member for the town, and the very day he received the promise in my favour, Mr. C**** was found dead in his bed, though he had been in company, and in perfect health, the night before. If I mistake not, the same messenger who brought the promise, carried back the news of the vacancy to Mr. S****, at Chester. About an hour after, the mayor applied for a nephew of his; but though it was but an hour or two, he was too late. Mr. S**** had already written, and sent off the letter; and I was appointed accordingly. These circumstances appear to me extraordinary, though of a piece with many other parts of my singular history; and the more so, as, by another mistake, I missed the land-waiter's place, which was my first object, and which, I now see, would not have

suited us nearly so well. I thank God I can now look through instruments and second causes, and see his wisdom and goodness immediately concerned in fixing my lot. He knows our wants and our infirmities. He knows what indulgences may, by his blessing, promote our real good, and excite us to praise his name; and what those are which might be snares and temptations to us, and prove hurtful. And he knows how to bestow the one, and to withhold the other. He does all things well!

Liverpool, September 7.

I WISH you well in the country, and in what part you best approve. To be sure, I should rejoice to see you; but I hope I shall not be impatient. However, when you are able, the sooner the better for your own sake, as bad roads and cold weather are approaching; and all the doctors here think that such an effectual change of air would strengthen you; but they have already mistaken your case. I wish you to come when you think you can travel as I mentioned, so as to hold out four or five hours, setting out late and putting up early; if you can thus advance only twenty miles in a day, it will bring you to me in time. But I only give my opinion; I leave you to your own prudence, or rather to the direction of Divine Providence, which, I trust, you will both seek and find, and to which I recommend you with an humble confidence. Many inquire after you, are pleased to hear of your amendment, and hope to see you soon. I say, Amen, at the Lord's best time. Till then, may he sanctify our separation, and enable us to trust his precious promises and tried faithfulness.

Liverpool, September 9.

I WILL not own, as you do, that I am indolent, but I am rather weary. I would be thankful for the account you give of your health, appetite, and colour. I hope your strength will return soon, and that I shall wait with cheerful patience till it does. When it shall please God to bring us together again, I hope we shall strengthen each other's hands. Let us pray for this, while we are yet separated, that we may not be left any more to live to ourselves, but to Him, and may look upwards and forwards, to be prepared for the next trial; for sooner or later more will come.

The town is almost in mourning, because the players are gone. On their last night, the house was filled by four o'clock. Gayety

and dissipation of all kinds increase daily here; when this spirit will stop, I know not. For myself, I live easy and retired, three or four hours every day, in my apartment, if business will permit. I need no diversions, and walking or reading are my only amusements, for I keep very little company; but my time is far from hanging upon my hands. I want nothing that this world can afford to amend my situation, but to have my dearest M*** with me, and for this, the Lord's time will be the best.

Liverpool, September 12.

I SHALL take care to write upon large paper, as you desire. But I believe the smaller may suffice for to-day. Most of my leisure this week will be taken up with Mr. Wh—d, which, as it is an occasional interruption, and from which I hope both for comfort and benefit, I think you will excuse. He came to town on Wednesday, preached on that evening, twice yesterday, and so will continue preaching twice a day while he stays. We shall try to keep him till Monday; though he says he never was in a place where he had so little encouragement to stay as here. I made myself known to him the first night; went to see him, and conversed with him the next morning, when he invited me to supper. I went home with him from the preaching, and staid till ten o'clock. So we are now very great; and very thankful I would be for the privilege. May the Lord yet give him to see that his labour of love amongst us is not in vain. But surely this is the most unconcerned town, for its size, in the kingdom. I hope he is sent to awaken some of the people out of their false peace. However, he is, as he was formerly, very helpful to me. He warms my heart, makes me more indifferent to cares and crosses, and strengthens my faith. I find you are making acquaintance with Mr. M****. Well, go on; I hope you will leave London soon, or you will be thought as singular as your husband. To speak seriously, it makes my heart glad to see in you one mark of a real believer, in that you love the ministers and people of the Lord, and are not offended with the Gospel, which is a stumbling-block and rock of offence to many. May he carry on his work, and build you up in knowledge, faith, and much assurance. Amen. Think of me as always thinking of you, and praying for you.

Liverpool, September 16.

Mr. Wh—d left us yesterday morning; I accompanied him on foot a little way out of town, till the chaise overtook us. I have had more of his company than would have come to my share at London in a twelve month. I heard him preach nine times, supped with him three times, and dined with him once at Mr. F****'s, and on Sunday he dined with me. I cannot say how much I esteem him, and hope, to my dying day, I shall have reason to bless God in his behalf. Having never been here before but one night, he was not known or regarded by the fashionable folks, though several of them went to hear him. But many of the poorer sort are enquiring after him with tears.

I commenced acquaintance yesterday with a good man, who lately lost his wife in child-bed the first year. He is the very picture of sorrow. I attempt to comfort him, though I succeed but poorly. It is only God who can give comfort in such a case. Yet I think few can be more capable of sympathizing with him than myself. What I have lately gone through is fresh upon my mind. And why was not the event the same to me? Every way I am distinguished. My prayers turn much upon the thoughts of our future settlement. It will require both prudence and resolution to set out right from the first; but, if we ask of God, it shall be given us. I would have you gradually prepare our sister for such a house as it will be our duty and privilege to keep; where God may be worshipped, and nothing practised or permitted that is contrary to our Christian profession.

Liverpool, September 19.

I follow you in my mind to Eltham, Bromley, &c.; though I know not the country. May the Lord be with you wherever you go, make known to you his covenant, and assure you of an unalienable interest in it.

I thank you for the account of Mr. B****'s sermon. You will observe, the principal effects or properties of Abraham's faith, by which he walked with God, were humility and integrity. He humbled himself before the Lord in secret, claiming no higher title than dust and ashes. And he stood up boldly, as his avowed, devoted servant, before men. Let us imitate him. I little doubt but he was thought singular, and perhaps laughed at, and so probably shall we; but I trust grace will make us scorn proof, and not suffer us to be in the number of those who are ashamed of the Lord Jesus and his Gospel. No, I hope he will enable us to glory in

the cross, and to endure the opposition we may meet with, as seeing *Him* who is invisible, who, when upon earth, submitted to be laughed to scorn himself, for us. He, having borne our reproach, has a just right to require that we should be ready and willing to bear reproach for him.

If the present fair weather continues, the road will be good to Warrington, where it will suit me rather better to meet you. But if you come by Chester, I can bring you by water in a pilot-boat very cleverly. Be sure that, for the sake of saving a little expense or time, you do not overact your strength. I could go on for an hour, in giving you foolish directions and precautions for your journey; but after all, it is best to leave you to the care of the Divine Providence, and to submit the method of your route to your own judgment.

Liverpool, September 28.

I CANNOT guess the reasons which, you say, taken together, will induce you to come by the stage. You may, perhaps, judge best, being upon the spot, and I would not overrule your inclinations. But as I know my own weakness, I am afraid it will be an uneasy journey, to me at least. As I have said before, I wish to trust you into the Lord's hands; but when we have the choice of means, it is our duty to consult Providence. Ask the first friend you meet which is the best adapted to your circumstances, as just recovering from illness; to travel from three in the morning till eight or nine at night, in a heavy coach, with mixed company; or from eight in the morning till five in the evening, in a chaise with your sister?

I pray the Lord to direct and strengthen you, and to give me a joyful sight of you again. My poor, weak heart, sometimes rebels, and almost complain because you are not yet able to come. But this humour seldom lasts a full minute, before my thoughts recur to the day when I left London, and that silences me at once. What a heap of guineas (had I possessed them) would I then have given, to be assured that you should, by this time, be so much restored as you are? Alas! I am still a sinful, inconsistent creature; but the Lord is merciful, beyond measure, to us both.

I go on making useful acquaintance. The Lord honours me in the eyes of his own people, which is the honour I most desire. And though some of the wags of my acquaintance have given me the name of young Wh—d, from my constant attendance upon him when he was here, it does not grieve me; and perhaps, if they would speak the truth, they do not think the worse of me in

their hearts. I find I cannot be consistent and conscientious in my profession, without incurring the charge of singularity. I shall endeavour to act with prudence, and not give needless offence; but I hope I shall never more be ashamed of the Gospel.

Liverpool, September 26.

I THANK you for thanking me, for the bill I sent you. But do not suppose I give it you. I expect to be repaid—I recant—I own myself in debt, over head and ears (as they say) to you still. I must not talk of repayment till I am clear. But, I think, to do you real service, I could as readily part with my life. May the Lord unite us, still more closely, in his faith and fear!

When I first asked Mrs. D**** to hear Mr. Wh—d, she could hardly give me a civil answer, (though otherwise she is very obliging and respectful.) But curiosity, or a better motive, prevailing, she went on the second day. She returned very well disposed; and asked me if I had one of his printed sermons. I lent her a volume. She went to hear him again, and became his great admirer. She herself first proposed my asking him to dinner; and his behaviour there confirmed her in her respect for him. I invited four or five Christian friends to partake of his company. She provided a handsome dinner, and when I spoke of the additional expense, she said she was very willing to bear it; but I do not intend that she shall. She has borne the reproach and laugh of many of her neighbours very well. They call her a Methodist, and she seems as easy under the charge as I am. So, we see, very unlikely things may be brought about.

Liverpool, September 30.

I MUST transcribe part of a letter from Mr. W****. "I have several times had the pleasure of conversing with Mrs. N****. God has been pleased to give her a great measure of your spirit," (so he writes.) "She is neither afraid nor ashamed to own her profession. After a sermon of Mr. B****, on Psalm xxv. 14. she told me, that the hearing of the great physician had done her more good than all her other medicines." Thus far he. The Lord help you to go on and to increase! Now, methinks, I am happy indeed! Now my highest wishes are answered, if my dearest M*** is partaker of the same hope with myself. How pleasant will all the future comforts and blessings, which the Lord may be pleased to afford us, prove, if we can discern them conveyed

to us in the channel of redeeming love! How pleasant will it be to look beyond them all, and, as the apostle speaks on another occasion, not to think that we have attained any thing as yet, comparatively speaking even when we have all we can wish for, but still to press forward in our hopes and views, towards the prize of our high calling in a better world, where pleasure will be without abatement and without end.

Since you were so ready to believe me when I said I had not been well, pray why could you not take my word about my recovery? For shame, my dearest: these fears and distrustful thoughts passed with us once, but we must aim above them now. Let us have no more idolatry, if we value each other's peace, or are willing to avoid such fiery trials as we have lately known. However, whether you can believe me or not, I must tell you again that I am in good health. The Lord be with you where you are, and in your journey when you move this way; and may we trust and serve him according to what he has done for us!

Liverpool, October 3.

I am not sorry that you complain of your heart; for, since our hearts will be bad, it is a mercy to be sensible that they are so. Nor will I contradict you when you say that you are ungrateful, and insensible to the Lord's goodness; only remember that you are so in common with others, and that there is not a person upon earth who knows himself, but must make the same complaint. I can find no words more suitable to my own case, than those which you make use of, only substituting your name for my own. "I delight, admire, and love to hang upon every sentence, and every action of my dearest M***; and yet how wanting, and how cold, am I to the gracious Author of all our mercies, to whom we owe each other, our happy affection, and all the satisfaction that flows from it." He might justly have parted us long ago for my ingratitude; He might have shut out my prayers in your late visitation; but He has raised you up to a new life. Oh! that it may be so indeed!

I shall endeavour to temper my zeal with prudence. I am far from proposing that you should keep company with washerwomen in this world. (Hereafter, I doubt not we shall be glad to join with such.) The religious acquaintance which I wish to cultivate with any degree of intimacy, will, I think, be confined to three or four families, all of whom are better to pass in the world than ourselves; and who, though perhaps they do not aim in all things at the top of the polite taste, are sufficiently well-bred

to be received as visitants any where, if their principles did not hinder. But this you may be assured of, that a consistent profession of real religion will carry the appearance of singularity in this town; and, unless you can confine yourself wholly to the gay and careless, and go all their lengths, you will certainly have a bit of the cross to carry, and must prepare yourself to be thought altered for the worse, by some of your acquaintance. I much more fear our being cowardly, than imprudent. But if we are of the number of those, whom the Lord will not be ashamed to own in the great day, he will give us a measure of grace, that we shall not be ashamed to own his cause and people, in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation. But, as you say, there is *a way* of doing things, I shall try to carry it handsomely to others.

It is not necessary to affront or quarrel with any who have treated us civilly; but, experience will convince you, that the less we are connected with worldly people the better. And as the Lord, by his providence, has placed us in a state of entire independence, and there is no consideration of trade or customers to prevent us from living, in all points, just as we please, I hope we shall judge better than to sacrifice our happiness and true interests to an empty sound.

But I perceive that you, likewise, have picked up a fine set of methodistical acquaintance. Should your aunt know it, she would set you down as almost ruined. But I, who love you better than a thousand aunts could do, congratulate you upon the acquisition. You may now see, by the examples before you, that true religion has nothing in it of the unsociable or gloomy; but is, on the contrary, the source of peace, cheerfulness and good humor. If, as you say, you love good people, He who has inclined your heart to love them here, will give you a portion with them both here and hereafter. Upon this single evidence, St. John grounds an assurance of heaven, saying, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." We may, indeed, love a good man upon other considerations; but to love him because he is good, because we think we see the image of our Saviour in him, and to love him most for the best parts of his character, is not possible till we have grace in our hearts; for till then, we have an enmity to the Gospel. And though this is not always visible and active, in persons of mild and gentle disposition, the farthest such can go is to say, I love the man because he is of a good life and behaviour, but he has some strange, unaccountable whims and prejudices.

Liverpool, October 5.

I BELIEVE you do not guess how I am disappointed when I receive only half a side from you. Indeed, if writing is inconvenient to you, I could be content with half a line; but your excuse seems to suppose you are afraid of wearying me; for you say, "I shorten this merely because my last was so long." Well, I hope a few more posts will bring us together; in the mean time, let me have as much of you as you can conveniently commit to paper. I fear lest, by the pressing manner of my writing, you should sometimes think I wrong you by a suspicion that you will stay a day longer than needful. But, indeed, it is my happiness to believe that your heart is as much here as mine is at London. I cannot make you a more expensive compliment. But, alas! whither am I running? I forget my own duty and yours. I fear it is of the number of our great sins, that our hearts cleave so close to each other, and so little to the Lord; that we are so thoughtful about the future, and so negligent of the present. It is, at least, thus with me. I still feel that you are my idol, and though the Lord has lately afflicted you for my sake, and is now raising you up for me again, as it were from the grave, I am not yet instructed.

Liverpool, October 7.

I CANNOT express what I felt to-day while I was reading your dear letter, which informs me that you hope to set out next week; but you can guess for me. Ten thousand thoughts crowd upon me at once. The remembrance of that mournful, painful week at London, when I could only behold and share, and, by sharing, increase your distress, without procuring you the least help or ease, (which I hope I shall never fotget while I can remember any thing,)—the situation in which we parted, when the Lord enabled me to hope against hope—the joy to think you now recovered from a most dangerous illness—the expectation of seeing you in a few days, and the former experience I have had, of what a happy meeting with you includes—all these different emotions of joy and sorrow, love and gratitude, took possession of my soul at once. And is it so indeed? Shall I receive you soon as restored from the grave, and have all my pleasures heightened by the contrast of my late trials? Oh! then what shall I render to the Lord for all his goodness? Could money or friends have helped us, you would have been relieved sooner: but there was no power in heaven or earth, that could restore ease to you or peace to me, but God alone. To him, therefore be the glory and the praise; all

the glory and all the praise! And let us aim to declare his goodness, not merely in secret, or to each other, but in the whole course of our lives by choosing what is pleasing to him, and avoiding what he hates. And especially, let us watch and pray against setting up our rest here below, and misplacing that regard upon each other, which is due only to him. May we be enabled to commit our dearest concerns, and have recourse in every trouble, to Him who has so often heard our prayers, and done us good. And, oh! that we may have that moderation, both in affection and practice towards earthly things, which becomes those who profess themselves strangers and sojourners here, and who look for a better inheritance, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Surely it was our own folly that brought our late distress upon us. We have lived too much to ourselves, and had not glorified, as we ought, the God in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways.

When Hezekiah was sick, nigh unto death, the Lord raised him up, and prolonged his life fifteen years. But we are told he rendered not according to the benefit he had received, 2 Chron. xxxii. Alas! how strongly does this charge lie against us! How often have we been restored to each other, after long and dangerous separations! How wonderfully have we been preserved from innumerable evils, to which, in such a world as this, we are hourly exposed! And yet it has now pleased God to give us a prospect of passing our days together comfortably, and free from many inconveniences which formerly affected us. But to keep us from growing too secure, just at the time, He did this, He laid his hand upon you, and by one stroke brought us both down to the ground. Now again, He is returning in mercy, bringing us health, peace, and joy. Let us bear the rod, and him who hath appointed it. For if we come together yet again in a thoughtless, ungrateful, self-seeking temper, he can again separate us in a way that we are not aware of. But, I hope and pray we shall be enabled to serve him from gratitude, and from a consideration of the great things He has done for us, rather than from a principle of slavish fear.

If you are really afraid of being a hypocrite, it is a good sign that you are not one. For the hypocrite is secure and confident, and has no suspicion of a mistake. But the best persons upon earth must own, that though, through grace, they are not hypocrites, there is too much hypocrisy remaining in them. Their real and fundamental aim is the glory of God; but wretched, sinful self-will creeps in, and taints their best performances. However, our comfort is, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. What a great word is that little word All! not only

from sins of one kind, or of one degree, but of all kinds, and of all degrees, when we apply to it in a truly humble and repenting spirit.

I was not angry with you for doubting of my health, (how do you think I can be angry with you at all?) I only meant to caution you against an overweening, distrustful care, which answers no good end, but is a species of sinful unbelief. And I foresee that against my judgment and experience, and notwithstanding all my grave admonitions to you, I shall too often offend in the same way, and you will have frequent occasions of giving me the same advice. But this is a part of our duty, and our privilege, to exhort and admonish each other, lest we should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

I was last night with Mr. and Mrs. ***. I think you will like their acquaintance. They are sober, sensible people, and seem very happy in each other. What a pity that the one thing needful should be wanting, when nothing else seems to be wanting! But so it was with us once; and it may be better with them hereafter.

1757.

Liverpool, February 2.

My Dearest M***,

I would not give you occasion to think that the return of your birth-day is less interesting to me at present, than it was seven years ago; or that my concern in it gives me less pleasure, now I am with you in Liverrool, than when I was exiled from you on the coast of Africa. It is a part of my happiness, and demands my daily acknowledgment and praise to God, that my regard for you is no more capable of being weakened by time than heretofore by absence. You will not expect me to address you in the strain of modern politeness, but I am persuaded that you will favourably accept what I may write, because you will approve my motive and my sincerity.

I often wonder at the ill-timed festivity and gayety with which the return of a birth-day is usually observed. Multitudes, who with respect to the past, can find little to make them reflect with pleasure on their having been brought into the world, and, with respect to the future, tremble in the midst of all their parade at the serious apprehension of death, yet agree to drown both the past and the future in noise and dissipation. For my own part, I see sufficient reason to make my birth-day, more especially, a season of serious reflection. And I recommend the practice to you. For

what is the language of a birth-day? Has it not a warning voice, to remind us another year of our time and opportunities is closed upon us, (time and talents for which we are accountable, and seasons which cannot be recalled,) and that death has advanced nearer to us by the stride of a whole year? And, therefore, I judge that a birth-day is a very improper day for mortals to be frolicksome. To those whose hearts are deeply engaged in the things of this world I should imagine the very thought of the occasion would be (like the hand-writing on the wall to Belshazzer, Dan. v.) sufficient to put a full stop to their feast, and to turn their joy to heaviness. But such is our depravity, that, till grace touches the heart, the most obvious and most interesting truths can make no proper impression upon us. But I seem to forget that I am writing to you.

I am no enemy to joy; and I am sure the real Christian, who has peace with God and in his own conscience, has both the best title to joy, and the best disposition for it. I invite you to rejoice; but let it be in the right way, and in the right manner. "Rejoice in the Lord;" and "Rejoice with trembling." Let us learn from the first, the sure grounds we have for rejoicing; and from the second, the many considerations which should correct and qualify our joy, that it may not deviate into a wrong channel, and become sinful and dangerous.

I say, Rejoice in the Lord. I congratulate you on your birth-day; not to give you a vain complacence in yourself, but to lead you back to the time and circumstances of your birth, that you may reflect on the goodness of God. You were born of creditable and affectionate parents, in easy circumstances, with a body neither diseased nor deformed, and a mind endued with rational faculties, with a soul formed for immortality, capable of loving and serving God here, and being happy with him for ever. Your lot was cast in a land favoured with the Gospel, without which all temporal blessings would have been of little worth; but if you take them together and compare your own state with that of millions of your fellow creatures, what great reasons have you to rejoice in this first view? But I would lead your thoughts forward from thence, step by step, through every succeeding year, to this day; through infancy, childhood, and especially youth, that dangerous period, in which such numbers make shipwreck of their hopes and prospects. Must you not say, "Surely mercy and goodness have followed me all the days of my life?" What sorrows, what sicknesses, what snares, have you either been exempted from, or preserved safely through? How many, within the circle of your own acquaintance, have been cut short before they reached your term of life? How many, who are yet living,

are suffering from evils to which you are equally exposed? I make no scruple to number our happy marriage among the blessings for which you see cause to be thankful; that it pleased God to bring us together, to bless us with a true affection, to restore us to each other after long separations, to recover us from long sicknesses, to fix us in our present situation, and, above all, to direct our hopes beyond the present world for our chief happiness. This is crowning mercy. If the Lord has shown you and me those things which are hidden from many of the wise and prudent; if we know our disease and our remedy, that we are sinners, helpless and hopeless in ourselves, but sinners for whom a sure and free salvation is provided in Jesus Christ, and that we have ground to hope that we are interested in the pardons and promises of the Gospel; that the hairs of our head are numbered, and that all things are working for our good; that God will be our sun and shield here, and our portion for ever, if these things are so we may well rejoice, but still it must be in the Lord; for all our good, present and hoped for, is from him alone.

But I say, secondly, Rejoice with trembling. Our joy in this world cannot be unmixed. There are unavoidables which, though they cannot take it from us, will and ought to temper it; such as these—An ingenuous sense of our unsuitable returns for so many and great mercies. May God preserve us from that terror of mind on account of sin, which, sooner or later, will be the portion of those who know him not! We need not be distressed; for though we have sinned, Christ has died for sinners, and is able to save to the uttermost. Yet, certainly, we have much cause to grieve and be ashamed, that we have lived so long to so little purpose, that we have received so much and rendered so little, and that after all our experience and resolutions, we are still so inactive and unstable in his service. The snares, temptations, and enemies around us, may make us thoughtful, if they do not make us tremble. These would surely prevail against us at last, were not the Lord on our side. We may almost tremble likewise for the sins of those among whom we live. Lot chose to reside in Sodom, because it was a pleasant country, and well watered; but the sins of the inhabitants soon made him forget the advantages of the place. His righteous soul was vexed, from day to day, by their ungodly deeds. And so shall we feel, if we have a due regard for the glory of God, the love of Christ, and the souls of our neighbours. We have likewise cause to tremble, when we think of the judgments that seem at present hanging over a sinful, insensible nation. We have just reason to fear lest mercy, so long despised should be withdrawn. Let us, like good Eli, tremble for the ark of God. And in this view we may tremble for ourselves, for we have con-

tributed our part to the filling up of the measure of national iniquity. We have neither borne that testimony against sin in public, nor mourned for it in secret, as we ought. And though, I trust, it shall be well with us at last, who can tell what scenes of distress and difficulty we may be appointed to struggle through, while we are upon earth? And therefore we should tremble, while we rejoice.

I could enlarge my homily, would time and paper permit. In brief, you have, to my comfort, been spared to finish another year. The event of the next is uncertain. I would therefore exhort you and myself, to live this year as though it would, as though it certainly were to be, our last. It may possibly prove so. Let us renew our application to the throne of grace, and the blood of sprinkling. Let us pray that we may be always ready; that our hearts may be withdrawn from worldly things, and be fixed, trusting in the Lord. And then, come life, come death, let peace be continued, or troubles be multiplied, nothing shall be able greatly to move us.

1758.

Warrington, December 13.

My Dearest,

Thus far it is well, and, I trust shall be to the end. The weather is fine, the roads good, the horse free and easy. He has not started once; though he sometimes raises his ears.

Now and then I feel some twinges at being forced from you, though but for a season; but the cause makes amends. Three or four weeks will, I hope, re-unite us, and then, one hour will repay the pains of absence. Let us not wish away the interval, but make the most of it, for it will soon be over. The new scene of life which appears to be opening before us, is very important. We have need to pray earnestly, constantly, for each other, and for ourselves. Make much of the means of grace, reserve seasons for retirement. Endeavour to avoid the company by which you cannot improve, and to improve by that which you cannot avoid. Adieu. May the peace of God here, prepare you for his glory hereafter. Amen!

Hunslett, December 15.

I have received my title from Mr. C***, and shall proceed to-morrow. I can hardly be more happy, while separated from

you, than at present. Dear Mrs. A***, who is well, is sitting by me on her husband's knee, while poor I am like a turtle without my mate. But I trust my time will come again. Till then I can think, write, and pray; I can repeat your name a thousand times; and therefore I look at them now with a pleasure unmixed with envy. But I must not trifle. I expect soon to assume a character which ought, if possible, to wean me from every thought that terminates in self or time. Pray for me, my dearest; my hour of trial is at hand; a solemn hour, which will call for all my faith, strength, and zeal. But the needful supply is near. In our Lord there is a fulness of grace, a sufficiency for me, for you, and for all that seek. May he give you that peace that passeth all understanding, may he bless us while apart, and join us again to our mutual comfort, here for a time, and hereafter for ever.

London, December 21.

WELL!—All is over for the the present, and I have only cheated you out of a journey to London. Last night I waited on the Bishop of Chester. He received me with great civility; but he said, as the title was out of his diocese, he could do me no effectual service, and that the notice was much too short. However, he countersigned my testimonials, and directed me to Dr. N***, the Archbishop's chaplain. On him I waited this morning. He referred me to the Secretary, and from him I received the softest refusal imaginable. He had represented my affair to the Archbishop, but his Grace was inflexible in supporting the rules and canons of the church, &c.

Had my eye been raised no higher than to his Grace of York, I should have been displeased and disconcerted; but I am in the hands of the great Lord of all. He has been pleased to prove me, whether my surrender to his will was sincere or not; and he has enabled me to stand the trial. As sure as our names are John and Mary, you will find that the time and expense of this journey will not be thrown away. I am quite satisfied and easy. The Lord will make all these things subservient to our good. He can open another door in a minute. I think to go down to Chatham on Monday, and to set out for Leeds about Thursday. It may be the second week in January before I reach home, though I long to see you, with all the eagerness of a lover. Take care of your health, especially the health of your soul.

Chatham, December 25.

I CAME hither, with your brother, on Saturday. Our family are all well, and well pleased with my design; only some of them express a little of their cares and fears about money matters. Mamma had a pleasing prospect that I should be curate to Mr. S***, that you might be near her again. But this prospect lasted only half an hour, for, upon inquiry, I found he was provided. I hear Mr. Hervey is dying, so that I cannot see him in this world. You may trust me to make the best of my way home. I seem already to have been from you the term of an African voyage; and still find as heretofore, that nothing can make amends for the want of your company. Though the Lord permits difficulties and hindrances to arise for the trial of our faith and patience, I cannot believe that he either disapproves, or will finally disappoint, my desire to serve him. I surrendered myself to his disposal without reserve, and I cannot wonder, nor ought I to complain, if he takes me at my word, and puts my sincerity to the proof. Mr. B*** is pleased with the disinterestedness I have been enabled to show, and says he is persuaded we shall be no losers. He doubts not but the Lord will give us more than He will call us to part with. Be this as it may, as to dirty money; if He gives us grace and peace; if He continues our affection, and preserve us to each other; if He is pleased to be with us in every trouble and exigence; if he affords us a clear evidence of our interest in a heavenly inheritance; if he favours us with a calm believing acquiescence in his will; if he honours us with usefulness in this life, and crowns us with glory in a better—we shall surely have no cause for complaint. If once we reach heaven, we shall not think that we did, or suffered too much for Him who loved us, and gave himself for us. One glance of that happiness which endures for ever, will abundantly overpay us for all the cares and fears we experienced during our pilgrimage.

I cannot express the satisfaction your dear letter gave me, in finding you so easy and resigned, upon the event of my late attempt. This is a mercy I would, if necessary, or possible, or lawful, have purchased at the price of a limb. Nothing disquieted me from the first of my design, but the fear of involving you in difficulties, or causing you uneasiness. But in this, as in a thousand instances, I have found the Lord a hearer of prayer. And I hope, and believe, he has a blessing in store for you upon this account. You know me too well to suspect me of flattery; I give you my plain advice, when I think it needful. It is a proof of my affection. But neither ought I to withhold deserved praise. You have, from the first rise of this affair, acted a part

which perhaps few of your sex could equal. To make such sacrifices so cheerfully, and upon such slender grounds, is not common. I can only say it has not been lost upon me. My primary thanks, indeed, are due to the Lord, who gave you to me, and who gave you every qualification that could engage my heart, and gratify my utmost wishes in a wife. My next are due to you. The whole term of our union forms a series of many a proof of recollected love, as Thomson speaks. But nothing has more strongly enhanced my love and gratitude to you than your conduct when we were last at Leeds, and ever since. Take courage, hold on, the end will answer your expectations. I can say nothing as to particulars; but, in general, I am sure that none who put their trust in God shall be finally ashamed. I suppose you have your fits of fear and unbelief. I have likewise severely felt them at times. But mind them not; or turn them to advantage, by making them occasions of more frequent and earnest prayer. For it is written "Call upon me in trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Let us be diligent in the means of grace; these are the paths in which the Lord has commanded us to walk, and where he has promised to meet us, and bless us. The enemy would fain keep us from them, or make them burdensome; and he has too often prevailed. Should not experience make us wise? Has it not always been best with us when we have been most diligent in prayer, most attentive to the Scriptures, and most disengaged from the world and from trifling company? Have we not found a vanity in every thing but religion, especially when trouble has stared us in the face, or when pain or sickness have taken hold of us? Why, then, should we be fooled and deceived any more? Let us return to the Lord; there is forgiveness with him for the past, supplies suited to every need. None that come to him shall be cast out; none that rest on him shall be overthrown; none that love and serve him shall be unrewarded.

1759.

Loughborough, January 3.

I HOPE this will come in time, either to prevent or relieve your uneasiness on my account. Whatever you have suffered, or may suffer, for me, you shall be made amends, so far as gratitude will pass for payment, and so far as the study of my life can promote your satisfaction. If you have had fears for me, they were needless. And I hope you will in time learn to trust me, and all your concerns, to God, who careth for us. I left London on Saturday

about ten, but soon found I had a very indifferent horse. I have been obliged to travel his pace, for he positively refuses to travel mine: and though I tell him how impatient I am to see my dear M***, he will not move one foot the faster. When I came to Barnet, I demurred about the road; at length I turned to the right, not knowing when I might have so good an opportunity of seeing the persons I mentioned in my last.

I put up at Welling, sent a note to Dr. Young, and received for answer, that he would be glad to see me. I spent an hour with him. His conversation was agreeable, and much answerable to what I expected from the author of the Night Thoughts. He seemed likewise pleased with me. It would have surprised you to hear how I let my tongue run before this great man. He approved my design of entering the ministry, and said many encouraging things upon the subject; and, when he dismissed me, desired that I would never pass near his house without calling upon him.

I spent Sunday at Everton, and am glad I went, though it will cost me two days more absence from you. The first five miles from thence into the York road, were, I think, the worst I had ever rid or seen. I was sometimes in fear for myself, but more frequently for my poor horse, lest I must have left him sticking in the clay, as a memorandum of my having passed that way. When I put up at night, I found I had come about six miles beyond the place where I should have turned off. It was a poor day's journey, but eighteen miles in all, and six of them out of the way. On Tuesday I was advised to keep on sixteen miles further, and I should find a turnpike road to Leicester. If I had missed this turning likewise, I should have missed some trouble and trepidation. I had thirty-three miles cross road to go, and found much of it a cross road indeed. Though the worst pieces of it, if taken together, were not above ten miles, I would rather go a hundred miles round, than travel it again. I am still a hundred miles from you, but I have no more kind friends, nor cross roads, to detain me. Thank the Lord for preserving me in health and safety. My horse is recovered from his fright, and seems in better order than when I left London. I am likely to jog on by myself; for if any persons were going my way, they would hardly have patience to wait my horse's motions, nor would he mend his pace to please any body. But I trust I am not alone, nor do I often feel a want of any company but yours. Continue to pray for me. I trust we shall live to see the hand of God over-ruling every thing for our benefit; and that every separation, inconvenience, or expense, occasioned by a desire of promoting his glory, shall be well made up to us in the best time.

Hunslett, May 17.

I CANNOT tell you how often your dear name has been in my mouth since I left you, nor how earnestly and frequently I commend you to the Lord's blessing. May he teach us to improve these short, occasional separations. When I am absent from you, I most sensibly feel how dear you are to me; and what a heavy trial I should have, if God was to take you wholly from me. I ought to believe that He will enable me to bear whatever he may appoint, because such is his promise; but at present it seems that a blow so near to my heart would be long and deeply felt, in every other circumstance of life, and that I should find pleasure in nothing but in bemoaning my loss. I doubt not but you have similar thoughts, upon the supposition of my being removed. May we therefore learn, in the first place, to be thankful that we have been so often restored, and so long preserved, to each other; and, that our affection is still maintained inviolable and increasing; and, secondly, to be watchful and cautious, that we do not, by our idolatry or ingratitude, render it necessary for the Lord, even in mercy, to wound us in the most sensible part, and to punish either of us in the person of the other.

1760.

London, July 4.

You did not bid me write, because, I suppose, you hardly thought I could refrain, for so many tedious days, from giving my mind a little vent. How often have I told you, that whatever pleasure or amusement I may find in the company of friends, yet there is a peculiar something, that shares in, and gives an inexpressible cast to, every motion of my mind, when you are absent? A man deprived of his right hand, may go about his business with the same spirit and alacrity as in time past; yet every thing he undertakes will necessarily remind and convince him of his loss. This, or something like it, I may have hinted a thousand times; but as I write and speak from my heart, the thought occurs as readily to me as at the first, and I cannot easily avoid repeating it. I am afraid of idolatry; I am afraid we have been, and still are, too guilty of the charge; and the Lord, to whom alone we belong, and to whom all our services and affections are primarily due, might justly, very justly, blast our boasted paradise. Yet we owe it to him that our souls are susceptive of tender and generous feelings. He formed us for each other, and his good providence brought us together. It is no wonder, if so many years, so

many endearments, so many obligations, have produced an uncommon effect; and that, by long habit, it is become almost impossible for me to draw a breath in which you are not concerned. If this mutual affection leads us to the Fountain from whence our blessings flow, and if we can regard each other, and every thing about us, with a reference to that eternity to which we are hasting, then we are happy indeed. Then not even death (the dread of mortals, especially of those who live in the possession of their wishes) can greatly harm us. Death itself can only part us for a little pace, as the pier of a bridge divides the stream for a few moments, but cannot make a real separation. The friendly waters soon mix again, and, with one force and consent, press forward to the ocean.

Were it not for the support of believing that there is a brighter and a longer day beyond the grave, I should sink down in despair, and starve, if I may use a vulgar saying, in the midst of plenty. For though I have known too much, not to smile at the cold disciples (if there are any such) of Platonic love; yet, methinks, a regard like ours is designed to flourish in a better world than this, and can never appear displayed to its full extent and advantage, until transplanted into those regions of light and joy, where all that is imperfect and transient shall be no more known. Here, then, is the true plan of happiness for us; to consider that God, who made us, made us immortals; and appointed us to spend so many years in the most interesting connexion, not only to sweeten the cares of life, and to render our path through this wilderness more easy, but chiefly that we might be helpful in animating each other, in our progress to that kingdom and crown which is incorruptible and undefiled; a kingdom to which we are called by Him who died once, to give us right, and now lives for ever, to give us entrance.

Liverpool, August 6.

It is almost noon, and no letter. I begin to fear I shall not have one by this post; and I know not the time when a letter from you would have been more welcome, or more necessary. I can but poorly bear your absence at any time, but I seem to need you now more than ever. I feel much suspense and anxiety about our late proposed movements; and I have no one to whom I can unbosom myself; or, if I had a thousand friends, they would signify little without you. I am ashamed and grieved to think how irksome I find it to be here alone.

Now I am well again: a great rap at the door, and a letter from somebody, has quite cured me. But as a few days of my

leave of absence are yet unexpired, and the collector (to whom I told a sad story, what a poor disconsolate thing I am,) has added six more to them, I think to take a journey into Yorkshire, and to meet you in good time at Manchester. I am told the coach performs in two days, which I am afraid will be fatiguing to you; but if I get hold of you again, you shall not want for good nursing.

I am glad you ventured to London by water; for I wish you to strive against, and conquer, vain fears. The only way of doing this effectually, is by placing our hopes and fears where alone they are due. Let us pray for grace to fear the Lord, and his goodness, and then we need not be afraid though the earth be moved, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea. Many a prayer I have put up for you since I saw you. I hope the Lord will answer us for ourselves and each other. I hope you will not be wanting to pray for yourself. Prayer is the great secret which gives the true relish to life. When I can pray with some liberty, I find all goes on well; when I cannot, I have no real pleasure in any thing. I believe I should not have begun my letter in so complaining a strain, if I was not much out of frame for prayer. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you, is a maxim that we ought always to regard. To-morrow I set off for Yorkshire. But how gladly would I give up the pleasure of visiting my friends there, to fly by the shortest road to you, that I might tell you by word of mouth, if I was able, how much I am

Yours, &c.

1762.

Liverpool, June 14.

You will, perhaps, wonder that I choose the formality of writing, when we have so many happy opportunities of exchanging hearts by discourse. But in this way I can collect my thoughts, and present them to you in one view. And you can likewise peruse and reconsider them at your leisure. Therefore, without further apology or preamble, I proceed to the point.

Though it is not necessary, it always gives me pleasure, to repeat how truly I love you, how much my happiness depends upon you, and that I never taste pleasure more sincerely myself, than when I am instrumental to the promoting of yours. And that, on the contrary, I account it among my most painful trials if, either through inadvertence or necessity, I occasion you any uneasiness. I assume no merit from being able to say this. It amounts to no more than that I know when I am well. Besides, it is a just debt, in which I stand bound for the innumerable obligations your

affection daily increases upon me. I should be blind not to perceive, and ungrateful if I did not acknowledge, that you are not behind-hand with me in your inclination; and from the turn of our circumstances, you have had fairer opportunities of showing what sacrifices you can make for my repose, especially within these last three years.

And still, it seems, the advantage is, and will be, on your side. I am still striving to decline the thoughts of an undertaking which, though otherwise I should think agreeable, has this momentous difficulty attending it, that it has not your full concurrence and approbation. If I thought myself in the path of duty, and had you on my side, methinks all trials would be comparatively light; but when duty seems to call one way, and my regard for your peace seems to plead powerfully for another, how can I but be greatly perplexed?

Not but that I am well assured, If I told you I was at such a pinch that I could see no medium between grieving you, and acting against the light of my own mind, you would comply with any proposal I could make; and would rather suffer in silence, than see me at continual variance with myself. But such a consent would not satisfy me. The more you constrained yourself for me, so much the more should I be pained for you; and thus, by our sensibility, we should give each other greater trouble, in proportion as we endeavoured to avoid it.

I hope, therefore, that I write this in a happy hour, and that the Lord, who has power over all hearts (to whom we owe our all, and especially our mutual love) will accompany it with his blessing, that I may not merely extort your consent, but obtain your full concurrence and approbation to my design. I much desire to enlarge my little attempts in the way of preaching, or expounding (call it what you please) in Liverpool. The wish of many here, the advice of many absent, and my own judgment (I had almost said my conscience) are united on one side; which I think would preponderate against Mr. B***'s single sentiment, if your fears did not add weight to his scale.

The late death of Mr. Jones, of St. Saviour's, has pressed this concern more closely upon my mind. I fear it must be wrong, after having so solemnly devoted myself to the Lord for his service, to wear away my time and bury my talents in silence (because I have been refused orders in the church) after all the great things that he has done for me. And should he throw me upon a sick bed, or visit you for my sake, I believe the sense of my cowardice and indolence, in this business, would greatly aggravate my distress.

I think there are but two possible objections against my purpose. The first is, that I should probably draw upon myself some of that scorn or opposition which, in a greater or less degree, is the usual portion of those who determine to be faithful. But even if this was a weighty something, though indeed it is quite light when compared with the blessings promised to those who suffer for the truth, it is some encouragement to find, that after it has been publicly known, for more than a twelvemonth, that several of my friends frequent my house on a Sunday evening, I have not had the least disturbance near home, nor been treated with the least disrespect or ridicule abroad, upon that account. And if I procured a larger place to speak in, I might still go on as quietly. However, I am willing to venture.

The other objection, being started by prudence, ought to be attended to. But I think that if I chose such times only as would not interfere with my business, I should run no hazard of losing my place. And this is the opinion of my immediate superiors in office, whom I have consulted upon the point. Nay, I know not but the diminutions I have found in my emoluments may be owing to my hesitation. If I serve the Lord heartily, he will be answerable for consequences; but if I continue to serve him by halves, and to rebel against the conviction of my mind, will it be any wonder that when I look for much, it should come to little?

You know that I am not wholly incompetent, either as to knowledge or expression. Shall I flatter your regard for me by hinting, that perhaps a step of this kind may, in a little time, gain me more respect and estimation than I have yet known? But, I hope, we both wish to be governed by a nobler motive. It will be of little moment what the people of the world once thought of me, when they and we shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ!

You justly complain of dull Sabbaths. Let us then embrace the first favourable opportunity of aiming at what may more enliven them. You love to hear me speak, upon all occasions. And I think you have sometimes heard me with pleasure as a preacher. And you know not what blessings may yet be reserved for you. Perhaps the Lord may send you the greatest favours by the hand of him, from whom you are kind enough to accept the smallest trifle with complacence.

After all, as I have already said, I cannot be content with forcing your bare acquiescence. I beg, therefore, you will think it over frequently, and entreat the Lord to direct us both. Perhaps, before long, it may seem to deserve your approbation. To hear you say so, would make me quite another person. For,

while I remain in this suspense, I feel, at times, a burden which I can hardly bear, and cannot possibly shake off.*

May the Lord bless, guide, and guard you, and abundantly reward you for all your affection and kindness to

Yours, &c.

1764.

London, April 5.

YOUR poor husband has need of your prayers, that he may not forget himself amidst the many caresses he meets with. I hope I shall not, but my heart is deceitful and desperately wicked; and I can already see how prosperity blinds and hurts even persons of good sense and much experience. I cannot but be pleased to find so many gracious people in the higher scale of life. But I hope I could take as much pleasure in conversing with the poor of the flock. I think I could be happy at Olney, if the Lord made me useful to the people there, though neither they nor I should be spoken of beyond the bounds of the parish. I am glad you are pleased with the prospect; for no earthly consideration can animate me so much, as to have our hearts and desires united in this point, as they are in every thing else. What a blessing do I possess in our undivided, unabated affection. May the Lord sanctify it, as a mean to lead us both more closely to himself. We are comparatively happy now; but we shall not be completely so, till we arrive in the better world of perfect peace and purity. My heart rejoices at the thought of meeting you soon at Liverpool; but

* The influence of my judicious and affectionate counsellor moderated the zeal which dictated the preceding letter, and kept me quiet, till the Lord's time came when I should have the desire of my heart. Had it not been for her, I should, perhaps, have precluded myself from those important scenes of service to which he was pleased to appoint me. But the exercises of my mind upon this head, I believe, have not been peculiar to myself. I have known several persons, sensible, pious, of competent abilities, cordially attached to the established church, who, being wearied out by repeated refusals of ordination, and, perhaps, not having the advantage of such an adviser as I had, have at length struck into the itinerating path, or settled among the dissenters. Some of these, yet living, are men of respectable characters, and useful in their ministry. But their influence, which would once have been serviceable to the true interests of the church of England, now rather operates against it. I was long in a trying situation, thinking myself bound in conscience, upon grounds which, I believe, would have stood the test of candid examination, could I have obtained a hearing; and yet refused admission, by two archbishops and one bishop, into that line of service which had my decided preference. This was one of the reasons I have to praise God for the partner He mercifully allotted me. She was useful to me through life, but perhaps in no one instance more essentially so, than in the prudent use she made of my affection to her, and of hers to me, at this period. I believe no arguments but hers could have restrained me for almost two years, from taking a rash step, of which I should, perhaps, have soon repented, and which would have led me far wide of the honour and comfort I have since been favoured with. The Lord's time is like the time of tides, which no human power can either accelerate or retard. Though it tarry, wait for it.

what will that be to the joy when we shall stand together before the throne of glory, free from every imperfection and trial; when we shall see Jesus as he is, be fully conformed to his image, and join in singing his praises for ever. With what complaisance shall I then consider you as the instrument the Lord prepared to preserve me from ruin? And how will you praise him for our union, if he is pleased to make me, in any measure, useful to promote your faith and hope!

I cannot, as yet, judge how my affairs will terminate. If it please the Lord, if it be the right place and the right time, I shall succeed. But I would have you prepared for what we call a disappointment. But disappointments are neither more nor less than providential intimations of the will of God.

London, April 12.

I WAS with the bishop of Lincoln this morning, and he has fixed on Monday next for my examination. If I get safe through that scene, I suppose my ordination will soon follow. He received me with great civility and candour. The beginning of my interview with the bishop of Chester was not so pleasing. I suspect that some person or persons at Liverpool had written to him, and not in my favour. Great men not being able to see every where with their own eyes, must depend upon information, and are liable to be imposed upon by misrepresentation. He said, that before he could authenticate my testimonials, he must ask me some questions. But when I showed him Lord D***'s letter, a full stop was put to all inquiries but what were agreeable. He became very sociable; kept me in chit-chat near an hour; and, when I took my leave, he wished me much success. I shall be glad to have this business fairly finished. My mind has been greatly unsettled. Much company, and frequent changes, do not well suit me. Friends smile and favour me on all sides; but creature-regards affect me too strongly, and I feel a degree of dearth in the midst of plenty. I hope I shall be better when we return to our old uniform way of life, so far as the expected change will admit of uniformity. I have been more familiar with the higher sort of life of late than formerly, and see it in its greatest advantage and beauty. But still my heart is at home; and I am fully convinced, that no assemblage of earthly things could make me more happy than I have been, and hope to be again, in the moderate situation to which we have been accustomed.

I desire to praise God for the progress of your recovery; and begin now to think seriously of our removal. How will you be

able to travel, so soon after your long illness and confinement? But why do I look so far beforehand? Will not He, who has done so much for us, do what is still needful? I must break off. May the Lord bless and comfort you.

London, April 16.

Just in the apparent moment of success, new difficulties occurred, which seemed to threaten a total overthrow to my business. So the poor sailor is sometimes alarmed with the apprehension of shipwreck, when his port is in view. But, as I trust all difficulties are now obviated, through the kind interference of Lord D****, to whom I have occasioned too much trouble, I shall say no more of them.

I waited on the bishop of Lincoln this morning, and have reason to revere him for his candour and tenderness. The examination lasted about an hour, chiefly upon the principal heads of divinity. As I was resolved not be charged hereafter with dissimulation, I was constrained to dissent from his lordship in some points. But he was not offended; he declared himself satisfied, and has promised to ordain me, either next Sunday, in town, or the Sunday following, at Buckden. Let us praise the Lord!

London, April 20.

What thanks do I owe to the Lord, for all his goodness to me! He made me willing to resign all, and to enter upon a very obscure and limited service, for the sake of his Gospel; but when it came to the point, he mercifully interposed to prevent it. I ascribe it to his goodness, that my application to the archbishop, six years ago, did not succeed. There is now a probability of my being comfortably fixed, in a more agreeable connexion. May he keep me humble and dependent, and all will be well. But I see some striking and unexpected instances of the great danger to which the countenance and friendship of persons of distinction may expose a minister. We are poor, weak, inconsistent creatures, if left but a little to ourselves. My next acknowledgments are due to Lord D****. He has greatly interested himself in my behalf. Considering his rank and some other circumstances, I might wonder that he should submit to take so much trouble, did I not observe, from other instances, that he thinks not of himself, where there is any probability that his influence can procure benefit to others.

As I have a little liesure, I must fill up the paper; but how? I can repeat that I love you, that I continually offer up prayers and thanks on your behalf. I can tell you again, as I have told you a thousand times that your dear person, your affection, and all its interesting proofs and pledges are deeply engraven on my heart. Oh! what do I, what do we both, owe to the God of our lives! Shall not the mercies we possess in each other, though great and valuable in themselves, be much more so in their effects! Shall they not lead us higher, and prove as steps by which we may rise to a still greater happiness! Yes, I trust so. When I look back with wonder to see how the Lord has led us thus far, by a way which we knew not, I am encouraged to hope that the end will crown the whole. How gracious has he been to me, in preserving me from innumerable inconveniences into which I have been ready to plunge myself; and in giving me so many advantages and friends! How gracious has he been to you, in visiting you seasonably, yet gently, from time to time; in mitigating your illness; preserving and composing you during my absence; in permitting you again to go abroad! And now, I hope, you have a change of situation before you, which will prove to your comfort in every respect. It is true, as you observe, if we remove to Olney, we shall not be wholly without trials. They are inseparable from this mortal state, and they are necessary to discipline us, and to keep us from wandering. Let us, therefore, guard against resting in the creature. Let us pray for submission to the will of God, and that we may welcome every event, from a sense of his hand being concerned in it, and a persuasion, (which his promises warrant,) that some way or other, all shall conduce to our final advantage.

Buckden, April 28.

I HAVE waited upon the bishop this afternoon; have gone through all the previous forms, and am to be ordained, (if the Lord please,) at eleven to-morrow.

I hope the repeated intimations I have given you concerning this long-expected to-morrow, have been in time to engage you in earnest prayer for me. I now almost stagger at the prospect before me. My heart is, in some measure, though I dare not say suitably, affected. I am to stand in a very public point of view, to take the charge of a large parish, to answer the incessant demands of stated and occasional services, to preach what I ought, and to be what I preach. Oh! what zeal, faith, patience, watchfulness, and courage, will be needful for my support and guidance! My only hope is in the name and power of Jesus. May that precious name be as ointment poured forth to your soul and mine! May that power be triumphantly manifested in our weakness!

I purpose now to cross the country to Olney, just to peep at the place and people, and to take the Liverpool coach at Stony-Stratford. If so, we may meet on Thursday. My heart jumps at the thought. But the Lord's time will be the best.

Buckden, June 14.

I CAME hither in safety, about eleven this morning. I have been twice at prayers at the chapel. The bishop received me very kindly. Whether I have a second examination to go through or not, I cannot yet tell.

I understand I cannot be dismissed very soon on Monday; so that it will probably be tea-time before I am with you. I think you will trust me not to make any unnecessary delay. You know where I left my heart, and that, even if I was in a much more agreeable situation than at present, I would break through all for your sake, and prefer the little vicarage of Olney with you in it, to the palaces of kings without you.

I meet here with many candidates for orders, but I know not that there is one of my own turn. However, they are all very civil; and I endeavour to accommodate myself to them, as far as duty and conscience will permit.

I pray the Lord to fill your heart with his love. Then you will bear my absence as easily as we can brook the want of a candle when the sun shines in his noon-day strength. Pray for me, and for yourself. And remember that, amidst the many things which require a degree of our attention, one thing is more especially needful. I commend you to his grace and blessing.

Olney, July 12.

YOUR letter (as you will believe) was very welcome. I desire to be thankful for your safe journey. I set off the moment the coach was out of sight, and had a pleasant walk home. As I was passing through Emberton, an old woman came after me, and invited me to her cottage. Five or six more women soon joined us. We talked, sung a hymn, and I prayed. I thought it a good baiting place by the way.

I am well, and as comfortably settled as I can desire, during your absence. I feel the want of your company, but hope to bear it without anxiety. I cannot wish to love you less; I hope it is impossible. But I wish, for us both, that our regard may be sanctified, and kept in due subordination. While I rejoice, that we are so happily sensible of what we owe to each other, I have

cause to mourn that our love to him should be so faint and disproportionate. His love to us passes knowledge. He loved us, when we were enemies, with a love expensive and interesting, beyond expression; a love that exposed him to ignominy and torture, that cost him his blood and his life; a love that makes over to those who believe in him, all the riches of grace and glory.

You need not propose Mr. T****'s case to me as caution. Our situations and constitutions are different. However, I shall try to be prudent and careful. But our times are in the Lord's hands. He who preserved me at Liverpool, will preserve me at Olney, so long as he has service for me to do. Beyond this, I have no great desire to live, unless upon your account. And, I trust, he will spare me while it is needful, and good for you. If we have an eternity to spend together in his praise, it is no great matter who is removed first, or how soon. All our tears will be then wiped away.

All our friends here seem to vie in civility; and those who are not friends are kept quiet. I hope not to provoke them by any part of my behaviour; but if they will be offended with me for speaking the truth, I cannot help it. As to provision, I am quite easy about it. The Lord, who brought me from Africa, where I was destitute of every thing; who has given you to me, and dealt so bountifully with us hitherto, will not suffer us to want any real good, now he has so visibly displayed his power and providence in placing me here.

Olney, July 14.

I OBSERVE what you say about Hempstead. It seems a situation in some respects desirable, and, was I only to consult my affection for you, I should wish to see you in more agreeable circumstances than I can expect to procure you here. But we have striking examples, to remind us of the danger of choosing for ourselves, and being dazzled by great prospects. I am well convinced that the Lord brought us hither; and without as clear an intimation of his will, I hope I shall not indulge a wish for a removal. The people love me; express a warm desire for my continuance; our assemblies are crowded, and I hope the Lord makes my preaching useful. While things bear this pleasing appearance, I should not only be ungrateful to the Lord and my friends, but blind to my own comfort, if I listened to a new offer.

My health continues good, and I can hardly form a wish but for you. But when, which is very often, I think of the distance between us, I give a little sigh, and long to see you. I pray many times in a day for your peace and establishment in grace; and I

rejoice in the hope that God is gently drawing you to himself, by the alternate inducements of light afflictions, and weighty comforts and favours. Let this be your encouragement and mine, that no one ever sought him (in the way of his own appointment) in vain. Though he may seem to delay, he will surely come, and overpay our expectation. For myself, I have been brought, almost imperceptibly, thus far. When I think how cold, dull, and heartless I have been; how often I have wandered, how often trifled upon the brink of temptation; when I consider what powerful, vigilant, and subtle enemies are combined against me, and how many professors have fallen on my right hand and my left, I am amazed at the greatness of his mercy in preserving me. I am a living witness that there is forgiveness with him; and that he is able to save *to the uttermost*.

Olney, July 21.

THE account you give me of the gentleman who dined with you, is very affecting. Every loss is gain that is over-ruled to bring the soul home to God. But the Lord hath dealt still more favourably with us. How often have *we* deserved to be separated! Yet we are spared to each other. May our lives praise him, and may we be freed from idolatry! To love each other, and dearly too, is no sin; nay, it is our duty. But he will not suffer a creature to usurp his place in the heart. The time of our ignorance, he mercifully winked at; but now he has shown us what is right, it behooves us to be upon our guard. Oh! that he may so display the power of his grace, that the bonds and shackles which detain our souls might be broken! He can, he will do it, if we wait and pray.

I now can judge by my own feelings, how much you must have suffered during my long stay in London, especially sick and confined as you were, and anxious for the event of my journey. I never pitied you, as I ought, till now. For though I likewise longed every day and every hour to see you, I had many things to divert my attention, and alleviate the feelings of absence. But at present, I am as you were then, at home and alone. But as I know, let who will have your company, I have your heart, I can make a good shift for a time.

How are brother and sister C****? Do they love like us? No, they cannot yet. For love at first is a child, and grows stronger by age. I wish them happy; more happy than this world can make them.

Olney, August 5.

I FEEL your head-ache at this distance. Your frequent indispositions are not pleasant; but I trust they are mercies, for which we have reason to be thankful. Our comforts and crosses are all from the same hand. We have chastisement, only because we need it. I aim to leave you in the Lord's hands. Should we not forget ourselves, if he did not seasonably remind us what, and where we are? In the case of some of your dear friends, for whom you grieve, you may see how, in all probability, it would have been with you, if his eye of love had not been fixed upon you from your birth. He prepared his dispensations, to withdraw you gradually from that life of vanity and dissipation to which you might otherwise have been enslaved all your days. And he has been gently dealing with your heart for several years past; leading you, if slowly, yet I hope surely, nearer to himself. How much of his ways, how many of his people, has he shown you! and he has given you a heart to love them, and reconciled you to things to which you were once as little inclined as those whom you now pity.

If I consider the endearing union he has cemented between us, with all its effects, only in a temporal view, I prefer it to all the treasures, pleasures, and honours, this world can afford; so that I would not exchange the joy I feel in the thought that you are mine, to be monarch of the whole earth. But, surely, it is much more valuable, considered as the mean by which the Lord designed to unite us both to himself.

1766.

Olney, September 12.

I PRAY God to bless to you the ordinances and conversation you are favoured with in London, that you may go into Kent filled with the spirit of truth and love. When you are there, I hope you will make good use of the Bible, and throne of grace, to preserve you from being infected by the spirit of the world. Ah, what a poor, vain thing is the world! We have both found it so at times, (though we once loved it,) and shall find it so again. But may the Lord keep us alive to a sense of its vanity, before more evil days return to extort the confession from our feelings! Sickness and pain, and a near prospect of death, force upon the mind a conviction of the littleness and vanity of a worldly life. But there is a more pleasing way of learning this lesson, if we pay due attention to the word of God, and pray for the light of his countenance. If he is pleased to make his face to shine upon us, all

that the world can offer to bribe us, will appear insignificant and trivial as the sports of children.

He who has given us this desire, will, I trust, answer it, and unite our souls to himself for ever! Happy state! To have peace with God, by Jesus Christ; liberty of access at a throne of grace; an interest in all the promises; a sure guide by the way; and a sure inheritance at our journey's end! These things were once hidden from us. We were so blinded by the God of this world, that we could look no further than the present life. But, even then the Lord looked upon us with an eye of mercy. He led us on, gradually, by a way which we knew not, to bring us into the paths of peace. How wonderful has our history been, not mine only, but also yours! How often has he made himself known as your Deliverer and Physician, in raising you up from the gates of the grave! May we always remember his goodness in your last affliction. How did he sweeten the bitter cup; strengthen you with strength in your soul; enable you to pray for yourself, engage the hearts of many in prayer for you, and then speedily answer our prayers. Let us then excite each other to praise him! I hope this little interval of absence will be useful, to make me more sensible of his goodness in still sparing you to me. I make but a poor shift without you now from day to day; but I am comforted by the hope of seeing you again shortly. Had you been removed by your late fever, I should not have had this relief! May we then live to him, and may every day be a preparation for the parting hour. Dark as this hour seems in the prospect, if we are established in the faith and hope of our Lord, we shall find it supportable; and the separation will be short. We shall soon meet again, happy meeting! to part no more! to be forever with the Lord; to join in an eternal song to him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood! Then all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and we shall weep no more for ever.

Olney, September 26.

I WAS with you in spirit this evening, at the Lock, and prayed that the Lord would give a blessing to what you might hear. To love and trust the Lord Jesus, is the great lesson we have to learn. We are slow scholars, but he can teach us effectually. Without him, the very *best* of this life is insipid, and his presence can make the *worst* supportable. I often think, and hope, you do not forget how graciously he supported and answered you, in your late distress. There was a something that could, and did,

bear you up under pain and anguish, and refresh your spirits when your bodily strength was almost worn out. This is an instance of what he can do; and should be a bond of gratitude upon both our souls. Your health is restored, and mine is preserved. May we devote our whole selves to him. He has great things to bestow; and if we feel our need of his mercy, we are properly qualified to receive it. We are not called to buy, but to beg; to receive, without money and without price. By believing, all becomes freely and surely our own; not on the account of our prayers, but of his promise, blood, and mediation. And all he requires of us is, to be humble and thankful; and the more he gives us, to desire still the more. Oh, my dearest M***, I bless his name for bringing us together, and for sparing us to have some knowledge and communion in these great things! How many that were joined about the same time with us, or since, have been separated by death! How many are living in mutual disgust! And how many, who seem happy, are, in reality, miserable, because they know nothing of the Lord, and of his goodness!

Olney, October 8.

I BEGIN to count the hours to Friday. I am very desirous, though not anxious, to see you. The Lord has been good to me in your absence; the time has not seemed tedious, and all things at home and abroad, as well as I could wish. I begin to write to-night, because I have devoted to-morrow to be spent with as little interruption as possible, as a day of prayer, to entreat him to give us a happy and sanctified meeting, and that our future lives my be devoted to him. How great are our obligations for uniting us at first; for restoring us so often; or raising you up from so many illnesses; for preserving our affection; for over-ruling our concerns; for providing us friends; and, especially, for directing our hearts to seek his face. And still he is loading us with his benefits. Though we have not been without our trials, yet, all things considered, who has passed more gently through life thus far? And with whom, upon the face of the earth, could we be now content to change? But with nothing has my heart been more affected, than with his goodness in and since your late illness. I am persuaded something passed then, that has left a relish and effect upon your mind ever since. Is it not so? Are you not determined to be his? Next to the salvation of my own soul, I have had no desire so often in my heart, so often in my lips, as to see you wholly given up to him? And, I trust, he has been answering my prayers, my many thousand prayers, from

year to year. What a bauble, in my eye, would the possession of the whole earth be, in comparison with our being fellow-heirs of the hope of eternal life.

I purpose to be in time to receive you at Newport. Perhaps I may wait at Mr. R****'s, as he lives opposite to the inn gate. But when I hear the sound of the coach, I shall take my leave with very little ceremony. You never were more welcome to me in your whole life, than you will be this time.

1768.

Olney, April 5.

I HOPE this will be the more welcome for being unexpected. May it find you in health and peace, panting after communion with God.

I think of you all day; and though I do not seem quite so much at a loss when you are from me as I have sometimes formerly been, I am sure it is not because I love you less. The Lord has given us a sufficiency of mutual affection, which has been strengthened by a long series of endearments and kind offices, and by a near participation in the comforts and trials of life. And now it should be our great concern and prayer, that our love may not be inordinate, or irregular; nor interfere with what we owe to the great Lover of our souls. The apostle's question, "Was Paul crucified for you?" suggests a thought which disparages all creature-regard, as the splendour of the noon-day sun overpowers the twinkling of the stars.

May the Lord open your ears and your heart, that you may receive profit where you are. Do not give place to unbelief. Jesus is both an able and a willing Saviour. Pray for a tender conscience, and a dependent spirit. Watch against the motions of self; they are subtle and various. Let no engagements prevent you from reserving seasons of retirement for prayer, and reading the Scriptures. The best company, the best public ordinances, will not compensate for the neglect of these. At the same time, guard against a spirit of bondage; nor fetter your mind by too many rules and resolves. It is our privilege to serve the Lord with cheerfulness; not considering him as a hard master, but as a tender father, who knows and pities our weakness; who is ready to pardon our mistakes, and to teach us to do better. He accepts us, freely and graciously, when we present ourselves before him, in the name of Jesus, his beloved Son.

Martham, April 15.

We reached this place to-day, about noon. I am very well, only much fatigued. The man you saw step into the coach, was drunk all the way to Colchester, (where we left him.) He swore, for a time, almost at every word. As soon as I could find a favourable opening, I spoke to him. He was civil, and promised to swear no more. But, poor man! he might as well have promised not to breathe. However, he was tolerably quiet afterwards.

My heart loves you, my dearest, and many an ejaculation I breathe out for you; which, indeed, is almost the only kind of prayer I have found time or room for since I left London. But I hope to be recruited and composed soon. I am likely to have business enough in hand next week. At present, I am dry and empty; but the fountain from whence I have been often supplied, is still full and flowing. Excuse a short letter: If it was not to you, I could not write at all.

Olney, May 1.

The Lord brought me home in safety last night. I believe our dear people are truly glad to see me; and I am sure I rejoice to be with them again. I preached this morning from 2 Sam. vii. 24. I wish my dearest a growing experience of the subject. No honour can be compared to that of being the Lord's people; no privilege like that of having him for our God.

I must not write much, for it is almost time to find a text for the afternoon, which I have not yet done. I went this morning into the pulpit, as having only a small piece of bread, and of fish, to set before the multitude. But, through mercy it multiplied in the distribution, and, I hope, there was a comfortable meal for those who were present and some fragments left that will not be lost.

It is not choice, but necessity, that makes me sometimes live, as we say, from hand to mouth. While my head is full of new persons and places, I cannot do otherwise. And I have reason to be thankful that my hopes are seldom disappointed upon such occasions; though I know not when I have been so straitened and embarrassed, as I was the other night at the Lock. I rather wonder that this happens so seldom, than that it happens at all. How justly might the Lord take his word of truth out of my unworthy mouth! Perhaps he saw it good for me, that Mr. Self should have his comb cut rather there, than in another place; and I hope there is that in me, which is as willing to appear to a disadvan-

tage (if it must be so) at the Lock as at Olney: though, to be sure, flesh and blood is pleased to be thought *somebody*, when among dear friends or fine folks.

Olney, May 3.

I DID not promise to write to-day, but my heart is always ready and opportunity always welcome. I am in good health and glad to be again retired from yonder noisy city.

I wrote yesterday to Mr. A****, and, in my evening walk, my thoughts and prayers turned much upon the affecting stroke he has received. Indeed, it has been seldom out of my mind since I came home. Besides my concern for his loss and my own, (there is no cause to mourn for *her*,) I consider it as a loud speaking lesson to me and to you. How often has she been raised up from the brink of the grave, in answer to prayer; and yet, now suddenly and unexpectedly removed? We likewise have been long preserved, and often restored to each other. But a time will come when every gourd will wither, every cistern be broken. Let us pray for a waiting, resigned, and dependent frame of spirit; for ability to commit ourselves, and our all, into the merciful hands of Him who careth for us; and that, while we are spared, we may walk together, as help-meets and fellow-heirs of eternal life. We shall not be parted a moment sooner, for living in daily expectation of our appointed change; but the thought may be a happy mean of composing our minds, and of preventing us from being too much engrossed, either by the sweets or the bitters of this transitory life. Many occasions of care and perplexity, that are apt to waste our time and wound our peace, would be avoided, could we duly consider how soon we shall have done with all these things. May you, may I, be more rooted and grounded in the truth, more humbled and comforted, more filled with that love, joy, and unspeakable peace, which the Gospel reveals, and for which the promises of God warrant us to pray. Be not discouraged because you have nothing of your own. The bucket is put into the well empty, and because it is empty, the Lord has opened a well of salvation for us, and has promised that we shall not seek his face in vain.

I long to have you at home with me; for though I am, in a sense, very comfortable, the house looks unfurnished without you, and I miss you in every room. How then must the *Moorside* look to our dear friend! Every step he takes, every person he meets, must remind him of his loss! But I trust the Lord is,

and will be his support. May his grace be with us! Then we shall be equal to every thing that can possibly befall us, and need not be afraid of evil tidings.

Olney, May 5.

Your last dear letter found me in peace, and, I hope did me good. It quickened my prayers and praises on your behalf. I never attempt to pray without putting up some petition for your spiritual welfare, nor without aiming at least, to express my sense of gratitude to the Lord for joining our hands and hearts. Your affection and its consequences, are continually upon my mind, and I feel you in almost every thought. I am willing to hope that I am, in some degree, freed from the idolatrous regard which made me place you too long in a light for which I deserved to forfeit you every day. But I am sure my love has suffered no abatement; yea, I am sure it has increased, from year to year, though I endeavour to hold you more in subordination to Him to whom I owe you, and by whose blessing alone it is that we have found comfort in each other. I trust the Lord had a further design than our accommodation in the present life, in bringing us together; even that we might be joint witnesses and partakers of his grace, and fellow-heirs of salvation. Our earthly connexion must cease; but an eternal union in happiness is an important prospect indeed! Every things else, however valuable in its place, sinks into nothing upon the comparison.

If youth, and health, and life, could be prolonged for a thousand years, and every moment of that space be filled up with the greatest satisfaction we can conceive, this seemingly long period must at last terminate; and when once past, it would appear short and inconsiderable as the eighteen years we have already spent together do at present. But if we are united in the faith and hope of the Gospel, we shall never part. Even that separation which must take place (so painful at times to think of) will not deserve the name of parting. It will be but like the one coming down first from London, and the other safely following in a few days. And, however flesh and blood may start at the apprehension, the case of Mr. A****, and many others, sufficiently prove the Lord's faithfulness to his promise, and that he can support those who trust him, in the most trying circumstances. Let it, therefore, be our chief concern to attain a good hope that we are his, and he is ours, and then we may cheerfully commit the rest to him. He can forgive sin, impart grace, subdue corruption, silence unbelief, make us strong out of weakness, and do more than we can

either ask or think. And what he does he does freely, without money and without price. He does not require us to help ourselves, before we apply to him, but to come to him for help, and we shall not come in vain. Fight, therefore, my dearest, against unbelief, and the Lord will give you the victory. Tell him, what I am sure you are convinced of, that you have nothing, deserve nothing, can do nothing; but that you have heard he is mighty to save, and has promised, that none who apply to him shall in anywise be cast out. None ever did miscarry in this way. If they did, his truth and faithfulness must miscarry with them.

Olney, May 15.

I HOPE your visit in Kent will, upon a review, be made profitable to yourself. You will admire the Lord's goodness in selecting you (as one of a thousand) to the knowledge of his truth, when you might (according to the views with which you first entered upon life) have been still swimming down the stream of vanity and folly with the multitude. How little did either of us think, in those early days when I first knew you, to what the Lord designed to lead us! Do not you see, and say, He has done great things? How often has he raised you from the gates of death? With what mercies and gentleness has he followed you? What a great advantage has he afforded you, in so large an acquaintance and intimacy with those who fear and love him! Shall the enemy urge you to draw discouragements from these multiplied instances of the Lord's goodness? I hope not. Do not give way to unbelief. Do not indulge perplexing thoughts of the secret counsels of God. What is revealed in the Scripture calls for our attention; and there it is written, as with a sunbeam, "They that seek shall find." It is true, when we are seeking, he often exercises our patience; but he has told us before-hand to expect it, and has given us encouragement, by parables, examples, and promises. to continue praying, and not to faint. Though he tarry, wait for him. Though he may seem to treat you like the woman of Canaan for a time, yet he is full of compassion and mercy. The humble spirit, the principle of faith, the heart-felt repentance, and every other gracious disposition to which the promises are made, are all his gifts, which he bestows freely on the unworthy.

Since you know that you are a sinner, and that he is the only Saviour, what should prevent your comfort? Had he bid you do some great thing, you would at least have attempted it. If a pilgrimage to some distant place was the appointed mean of salvation, would you be content to sit at home and perish? How much

rather, then, should you keep close to the throne of grace, when he has only said, "Ask, and you shall receive!"

When we first joined hands, neither you nor I knew much of the things pertaining to our peace. But as soon as the Lord began to show me a little of the way, how much, from that time to this, you have been upon my heart, is only known to him: and I trust he has answered, and is still answering, my prayers. What passed in your last illness I shall never forget. I think, had he then taken you from me, I could have rejoiced in my grief. From that period I have had a hope of more value to me than the possession of the earth, that he has taken a sure hold of your heart, and that he will not cease to draw you nearer and nearer to himself. Continue to pray, and watch over your spirit. Keep always in mind that you are a sinner, and Jesus is a Saviour of sinners. Such thoughts frequently recurred to, are means by which the Lord composes and sanctifies the frame of our tempers, and the strain of our conversation. Accept this little homily in good part, and may a blessing attend you in the perusal.

1769.

Olney, May 18.

I PREACHED yesterday at Collingtree. The church was full. Returned in safety before nine in the evening.

The case of those who decline from the good way, after they seem to have chosen it, is lamentable. Thus it might have been with us; but thus I trust it shall not be. The Lord has made known to us his name of love, and has shown us, what we should never have seen, had it been his pleasure to kill us. Let us live under abiding views of the all-sufficiency of Jesus the Saviour, and we may rejoice in hope. The peace of God, which passeth understanding, is seldom attained, but through a course of conflict. God gave Canaan to Israel by promise, and put them in possession, by the power of his own arm, yet they must fight for every inch of ground. The desire and the accomplishment, are equally of grace; yet, in the use of means, and with our eye to him, we must strive. Our poor exertions would be in vain, if he did not require them; but now they are needful, and shall be successful. The rod of Moses, the instrument of performing so many miracles, was no better than common wood, till the appointment of God gave it a wonderful virtue. Had Moses then refused, or neglected, to use it, he could have done nothing. Now the means of grace, especially prayer, may be compared to the rod of Moses.

If we go on, with this rod in our hands ; if we call upon God, meditate upon his promises, and plead them from day to day he will make our way prosperous.

Olney, May 28.

The Lord has mercifully brought me home in peace. The fatigue of the journey and the excessive heat on Tuesday, occasioned a slight fever, which went off that evening, and returned yesterday, as I was taking horse at Bicester. However, I rode, not unpleasantly, to Buckingham, and there, for fear of overdoing, we took a post-chaise to Stratford, where Mrs. U**** kindly met us, and brought us home. I have since taken the bark, and all the usual steps observed in intermittents. Preached without pain on Sunday. The fever is now gone, my appetite returned, and I am well. My slight illness was rather a baulk and hindrance with respect to my friends at Oxford and Sutton. But, taking all things together, I never had a more comfortable journey. I felt such a peace and composure, in considering myself and all my concerns in the hand of the Lord, as I cannot describe, and can seldom attain when in health. I had not one impatient or anxious thought, not even about you ; and seemed quite willing, if the Lord had so pleased, to have died upon the road. I was, yesterday, if ever in my life, as a weaned child. I hope this account of my indisposition will not hurry you home sooner than you intended, for I am quite recovered.

Olney, May 30.

My thoughts will accompany you to Wimbledon to-day. Give my affectionate respects to our dear friends, and tell them, I should have had much pleasure in being of the party. Besides the chief inducement of their company, I am fond of the place, and should promise myself some pleasant hours in the walks. But I know neither places nor company can communicate any real good, unless the Lord be present. And when he is near, any place, and even solitude itself, is agreeable. It is my mercy to find that in Olney which contents and satisfies me.

I have such a levee of kind inquirers every morning, that I am much interrupted in writing. It is pleasing to be beloved, and doubly pleasing to me to know, that the favour the Lord has given me here, is chiefly on account of the Gospel which I preach. The affection that is built upon this foundation will endure for ever, and will flourish when every other tie shall cease ; and thus, I trust, it

is between my dearest M*** and me. How closely has the Lord united us, by marriage, by affection, by the strongest and most endearing obligations! But all these respect the present life, and must terminate with it. But I trust there is a still nearer relation between us, in the Lord and in his truth, which shall subsist to eternity. In the mean time, may he give us to know more of the power and comfort of it, while we walk together here below; that we may rejoice in the knowledge of what he has done already, and in the prospect of what he has provided for us hereafter. Believe, my dearest, and you shall be established. Pray, and your faith shall be confirmed. Resist the devil with the sword of the Spirit, the good word of God, and he shall flee from you. Draw night to God, and he will draw nigh to you. I know your discouragements; but they are not peculiar to yourself. Surely, he has appeared for you in times past, and I cannot doubt but he will again.

I am glad to think the time of your return draws nigh. I miss you every day and hour; yet I cannot say that time is burdensome, or that I am very dull, or *unked*, as they call it here, in your absence; as the people think I must be. Several of them almost threatened to write on Sunday, to tell you how ill I was, and to beg you to return immediately; but their fears magnified the case. They long to see you, however, for your own sake, and give the most simple and affecting proofs that they love you dearly.

1770.

Olney, May 20.

I HAVE had a morning walk, in which I was favoured with some liberty; at such seasons you are always remembered. While I would praise God that we have been so long and so comfortably spared to each other, I must not forget that an hour of separation must come, and that the time is uncertain. It must be so; and it is well. Surely we could not wish to live always here! Oh for a clearer view of our interest in the love and all-sufficiency of the Saviour; that we may stay our souls upon him, and possess a stable, unshaken peace! It is He who has given us a desire to seek him, because He has purposed to be found of us, Jer. xxxi. 3. And, though our desires are too faint, and disproportionate to the greatness of their object, he will not despise the day of small things, nor quench the smoking flax.

I feel your absence, and long for your return; but I am not disconsolate. It was otherwise with me once. I can remember when the sun seemed to shine in vain, and the whole creation

appeared as a blank, if you were from me. Not that I love you less. The intercourse of many successive years has endeared you more and more to my heart. But I hope the Lord has weakened that idolatrous disposition, for which I have so often deserved to lose you. I am astonished at his patience and forbearance, that when I presumptuously gave you that place in my heart which was due only to Him, He did not tear my idol from me! To what dangers has my ill-conducted regard often exposed you! But he is God, and not man. I hope it is now my desire to hold nothing in competition with Him, and to intrust my all to his keeping and disposal. If we hold each other in a proper submission and subordination to Him, he will bless us, and make us mutually comforts and helpmates. He will sanctify the bitter of life, and give the sweet a double sweetness. His blessing is the one thing needful; without it, there is neither security for what we profess, nor true satisfaction in the possession. We have no good in, or out of ourselves, or which we can impart to another. We may pity but we cannot relieve each other when in trouble. We cannot remove one pain, or give one moment's peace of mind to those whom we best love.

Many prayers are, and will be put up for you and Mrs. U**** while you are away. It is this endears Olney to me. The Lord has a praying people here, and they pray for us. To be interested in the simple, affectionate, and earnest prayers of such a people, is a privilege of more value than the wealth of kings. In answer to their prayers, the Lord has placed a hedge about all our concerns, blessed our going out and coming in, and preserved us and ours in health, when sickness or death have been in almost every house around as. And, doubtless, I am much indebted to their prayers, that with such a heart as mine, and such a frame of spirit as I frequently mourn under, I am still favoured with some liberty, acceptance, and usefulness in my ministry.

1771.

London, Nov. 19.

We came safely to town about noon. I have just parted with my dear and honoured friend, with whom the hours of the journey passed very pleasantly. I am wondering at myself, and at every body about me. It seems strange to think of being so suddenly whirled away from you. So many preaching and other engagements are provided for me, that I believe I cannot return before Saturday. I hope the Lord will be with you, and that you

will be led earnestly to seek a blessing for me and for yourself. I have breathed out many a prayer for you since I saw you, and hope to do so while I can breathe at all. May He give us to grow daily in the knowledge of his grace, and to rejoice in the views of his excellency, and of our interest in him as our God and Saviour. This is the one thing; and the only thing which is promised absolutely, and without a possibility of failure, to those who desire it. Every thing else is vain, uncertain, and changeable. But he will surely, though gradually, make himself known to the heart that seeks Him.

I have been with Mrs. C****; she is sorely afflicted, but appears to be in an humble, dependent frame. From how many heart-rending distresses, by which others are suffering, has the good providence of God preserved us! May He make us thankful for the exemption, and teach us to bear our smaller crosses with a becoming submission to his will!

1772.

Clapham, July 2.

If it was not to my dearest M***, I could not write so soon after dinner. But though my belly is full, and my head empty, I must tell you that I had very quiet, agreeable company in the coach, and a pleasant ride to Deptford; where I mounted a horse my dear Mr. T**** had sent for me, which said horse brought me safely hither. Thus the Lord graciously preserves me from place to place.

I am always a little awkward without you, and every room where you are not present looks unfurnished. It is not an humble servant who says this, but a husband,—and he says it, not in what is called the honey-moon, but in the twenty-third year after marriage. Nor do I speak it to my own praise, but to the praise of our good Lord, who, by his blessing, has endeared us to each other. Inconstancy and vanity are inherent in our fallen nature; and, if left to ourselves, we might have been indifferent, weary, and disgusted long ago. But He has united our hearts; and, I trust, the union shall subsist to eternity. May we possess, while here, the peace which passeth understanding, and live under the abiding expectation of perfect happiness hereafter.

Olney, July 9.

I HAVE not much news to tell you. I have been to see Mrs. R****. You remember how near death she was, by falling into the water, about a fortnight ago. She was since persuaded to take the air, in a one-horse chaise. They were hardly half a mile from the house, when the horse suddenly fell, upon a smooth road, and by the shock she was thrown out of the chaise, over the wheel. You will not wonder that she was much hurt and bruised, if you consider her weight. No bones were broken; but the fall, in addition, to her previous illness, has brought her very low, and I think she cannot continue long. What thanks do we owe to the Lord for his merciful care of us in all our journeys, when others meet with such disasters close to their own home!

The state of some of our family where you are is much upon my mind. I hope I have engaged many to pray for them. The Lord grant that all you see, hear, and feel where you are, may draw your heart still nearer to himself! What is all below but vanity? There is no solid comfort no abiding peace, but what we derive from above. Once we knew nothing of this. But the Lord directed our path in life, in subservience to the designs of his grace. How few of those with whom you were acquainted in your early years, have any right knowledge of God or of themselves. We set out upon this plan; and if mercy had not stopped us, we should have gone on till we had perished with a lie in our right hands. Do, my dearest, take encouragement from what the Lord has done, to believe that he will do still more for you. Do not think that he has opened your eyes, and taught you that your help is in Him alone, only to disappoint you. The enemy would keep you from seeking him diligently and constantly, and would persuade you that you get little or no good from all your attempts; but believe him not. Rather believe the word of promise—that though he may seem to delay, he will not, he cannot deny those who persevere in asking in the name of Jesus. Thus much till the post comes in.

How little do I know of my own heart! While I thought myself sure of a letter, I vainly supposed I could be easy, though I should not receive one. But when the post arrived and brought no letter from you, my spirits sunk in a minute: and, I fear, I shall be too impatient in wishing for Friday. Surely my dear M**** knows me too well to think that, after a whole week's absence, I should not be longing to hear from her. If you inadvertently neglected to write, I must gently blame you: it ought, indeed, to be very gently, as it is the first fault of the kind I can charge you with since our happy marriage. I rather think you

have writen, but by some mistake the letter has missed ; for I am willing to hope you are well. I am quite disconcerted. But if I receive one by the next post, you need be in no pain for me, for that will set all to rights. I have been to bury a corpse at Weston this evening. I promised myself a pleasant walk, but the want of a letter spoiled it. I would fain have directed my thoughts to subjects of more importance, but I could not. Alas ! I am a poor creature. Pray, my dearest, write often ; for, next to your company, I prize your letters above any thing, merely temporal that this earth can afford.

Olney, July 12.

I WAITED about the street yesterday, till it was time to go to Orchard side, and then deputed Molly to supply my place. At half past four the horn sounded, and my heart went pit-a-pat. But I soon saw Molly pass the window, and by her looks and her speed, I guessed she had a letter. I snatched it from her and read it, and was presently well.

My heart was melted the other day, when I found the little book in your drawer in which you had begun to set down such texts of Scripture as had more particularly engaged your notice, and especially when I read the two pages of prayer with which you had prefaced them ; a prayer agreeable to the promises of God, and, I trust, dictated to you by his Holy Spirit. My soul gave a hearty Amen to every petition. I am sorry that any thing prevented you from proceeding in what was so well begun ; but I hope you will resume it when you return. The blessings of the Gospel are open to you. Could you steadily strive against the hindrances and discouragements thrown in your way, and simply and patiently abide in the use of the means of grace without giving way to vain reasonings, you would soon experience a growth in peace and comfort. To patient faith the prize is sure. may the Lord help you thus to wait ; and may he give us more freedom to converse for our mutual encouragement. I am a strange, inconsistent creature in this respect, as in many others. Next to the salvation of my own soul, there is nothing lies so near my heart as your spiritual welfare ; and yet I am often tongue-tied, and can speak more readily to any body than to you. Let us mutually endeavour to break through every restraint, that we may be helpmates in the best sense of the word. I preached this morning from Deut. xxxii. 10. The passage applies to all the Lord's people, "He found them in a waste howling wilderness." How emphatically does it apply to me? He redeemed

me from the house of bondage in Africa, and has selected me as a pattern of his grace to the chief of sinners. What a mercy to me I trust to you also. For he appointed us for each other from the first, and his hand brought us together, and into our present situation by a train of miracles.

1773.

London, November 18.

Past three o'clock, and a cloudy morning. So says the watchman. I hope my dearest is now in a sweet sleep. When I have done writing, I shall proceed to the coach, which sets off exactly at four. Pray do not fear my being robbed or hurt in the dark. For I expect a guard will go with me, One to whom "the darkness and the light are both alike." I went through a very long dark lane, on Wednesday evening, with my dear Mr. Th***; but no one disturbed us for the Lord was our preserver.

You may be sure that my heart is continually with you. I seldom pass many minutes without darting a thought upwards in your behalf. The knowledge of your affection affords me the greatest pleasure I can receive or desire, of a temporal kind. But your apprehensions on my account, when I am called from you for a season, give me pain. I wish we could both more simply intrust each other, without anxiety, to the Lord's goodness. Surely, he delights in our prosperity, or else why have we been spared so long? or how have we been so mercifully supported, so seasonably relieved, and enriched with so many blessings, from year to year? May all that we experience be sanctified, to humble us, and to increase our dependence upon Him who is always near and willing to help us.

I must go. I carry with me from place to place a heart full of an affectionate and grateful sense of your love, and of the innumerable and invaluable mercies and comforts the Lord has given me in the relation I stand to you.

1774.

Olney, April 27.

I sympathize with you; I already feel the concern which you will shortly feel, when you say farewell to your sister and your family. Methinks, if I could prevent it, you should not have a

moment's uneasiness, pain, or trial, from the beginning to the end of the year. But how could you then be a partaker of that good which the Lord bestows upon his people through the medium of afflictions? I hope he will give you an entire resignation to his will; and that the grief you and your sister will feel at parting, will be compensated by a cheerful hope of meeting again, perhaps more than once, in this life; but if not here, in a better world. And when you drop a tear at leaving your father, sister, aunt, and friends, remember that you are coming to a husband who loves you better than it is possible any or all other friends can. You will be more welcome to me on your return, than on the happy day which first made you mine. How will my eyes delight to see you, my ears to hear you speak, and my arms to enfold you?

My text to night is Psa. xxxvi. 7, 8. It is a full and gracious promise. The weak and defenceless shall be sheltered under the wings of the Almighty! How does the hen cover her brood with her wings! If her power was equal to her will, nothing should hurt them. The Lord our Saviour makes use of this image for your encouragement; and his power, like his compassion, is infinite. Again, the hungry soul shall be satisfied with fatness; not merely kept alive, but feasted, so that it shall thrive and flourish. Lastly, the miserable shall not only taste, but drink of pleasures; not a single draught, nor out of a vessel that will soon be empty, but from a river whose stream is perpetual, whose source is inexhaustible. We need not fear drinking a river dry. The streams of this river make glad the city of God upon earth. How much more abundantly will it flow in heaven? Here, then, is our encouragement. Creatures fail and change, but the Lord is always the same. And he gives the water of life freely, without money and without price. He invites all who hear, and receives all who come.

The clock is striking twelve, therefore I wish you a good night. May the angels of the Lord, yea, the Lord of angels himself, watch over your bed and your sleeping hours. My chamber looks rather solitary at present, yet, through mercy, I sleep soundly.

Olney, April 17.

I THANK you for your letter. I do not complain of its brevity. A single line to inform me of your safe arrival, would have gladdened my heart, and, I trust, have excited my gratitude to the Lord our preserver. Not that I think you in more real danger upon the road than when at home; for a thousand unthought-of dangers are always near us, and our own short-sighted care is in-

sufficient to preserve ourselves, or each other, for a single moment. Yet my foolish mind is prone to be more solicitous about you when you are out of my sight. I am conscious of many things which make me wonder at the Lord's goodness in sparing you to me so long; and that you have not been oftener, or more heavily, afflicted for my sake. But his thoughts are high above mine, as the heavens are higher than the earth. And it is our mercy that we are not under the law, but under grace.

I rose from my knees to take my pen in hand, and shall daily pray for you all. I trust the Lord has given your sister that knowledge of himself which will make her situation in Scotland agreeable. The earth is the Lord's; and his servants, where their lot is cast, have his throne of grace always near them. I know not how she may fare there in point of ordinances. However, if the Lord is pleased to dwell in her heart and in her house, he can make up every defect. His Providence, undoubtedly, leads her thither; and we can be no where better than in the path of duty. His blessing upon secret prayer and the reading of his word will keep her soul alive, though the public preaching should not be quite to her wish.

Though I miss you continually, I am neither lonely nor dull. I hope the Lord will give me a heart to wait upon him, and then I shall do well enough till you are restored to me. I need not wish the time away: it flies amazingly fast, and, alas! too poorly improved. These little separations should engage us to seek his blessing, that we may be prepared for the hour (which must come) when one of us must have the trial of living a while without the other. The Lord, who appoints and times all things wisely and well, He only knows which of us will be reserved for this painful exercise. But I rely on his all-sufficiency and faithfulness to make our strength equal to our day. It will require a power above our own to support us under either part of the alternative, whether we are called to leave or to resign. But He who so wonderfully brought us together, and has so mercifully spared us hitherto, can sweeten what would otherwise be most bitter to the flesh. If he is pleased to shine upon us, all will be well. His presence can supply the loss of the most endeared creature comforts, as a candle may be easily spared when the sun is seen.

Olney, April 23.

YESTERDAY I went to see Mr. C****. I found him in much distress, and his wife in more. They took my going very kindly, but the coming of the coroner prevented my stay. The burial was last night. The church-yard was full of people; but as the

hour was late, and the parents broken-hearted, I did not say much at the grave. The lad was in his fourteenth year; was just come home from school; and asked for victuals, but before he got any, went with the cart, which was going for hay. His father was cutting the hay at a small distance, and seeing the boy get up upon the sharps, he called to him, but was either not heard or not regarded. Another son drove the cart; the horse suddenly took fright, and the field being full of hillocks, the cart was soon overturned. The boy fell under the wheel and was instantly killed. He neither spoke nor stirred. Mr. C**** saw all that passed, and was then forced to be the mournful messenger of the news to his wife. It seems, she was wrapped up (as we say) in her children. I was told that when she heard of the event, she flew out of the house, and ran a considerable way, she knew not whither, before she could be stopped. She had afterwards a long succession of fits, and they feared she would have lost her senses. But when I saw her, she was more composed. She seems to be not without a sense of religion; she had been long a hearer in the lower meeting, but of late has come more to my church.

It is a heavy trial; but the Lord can cause good fruits to grow from a bitter root. How much praise do we owe him for that protection which has covered us, as with a shield, in all our journeys, as well as at home? I hope soon to have a call to thank him, for conducting you safely into Kent.

I have been to see Mrs. C**** again. It is a pleasant, retired walk to their house; but it was not pleasant to me this time. My heart, alas! was dry as a chip, unsettled as a weathercock. However, I could and did pray for you. I hope she is a good woman. She told me she had often wished that some occasion might bring me to their house. But neither she nor her husband could take courage (such a formidable animal, it seems, am I) to ask me. She is now troubled for having wished I might come. But I hope the stroke may prove a blessing to them both.

Olney, April 25.

I THANK God I continue in good health, and well enough in spirits. But the frame of my mind is cold, wandering, and unpleasant. For the most part, when you have been abroad, I have been favoured with more composure, and the hours have passed more agreeably and profitably, than at present. But you need not wish yourself at home merely upon this account. For the Lord alone can remove the complaint of a dull, dissipated frame. Your tenderness can do much for me, but you cannot relieve me in this case. But though I am not as I wish to be, I am not unhappy.

My text to night, when I lay my head upon my pillow, will be Psalm xxxiv. 15. Who are the righteous, upon whom the eye of the Lord is fixed, and to whose cry his ear is open? Not the self-righteous—but the helpless, unworthy sinners, who, without any plea but the word of promise, put their trust in the name of Jesus. These are accounted righteous for the Saviour's sake. They are accepted in the Beloved; and, because they ask in his name, their prayer is heard. Why should not we, my dearest, open our mouths wide, and expect great things, when we have such an advocate? Do you say, How shall I know that He is mine? I answer, He is an advocate for all who will commit their cause to Him. They are not described by name, but by character; as sinners who have no hope in themselves, are not willing to perish, and, therefore, hearing that he is able and willing to save to the uttermost, venture upon his word, cast themselves at his feet, and commit their all into his hands. Have not I, and have not you, such thoughts of ourselves, and of Jesus the Saviour? Wait, then, for Him; give not way to unbelief: he can do all that he says, and he says no more than he means to perform.

Olney, April 30.

I FEEL for you every day while you are at Chatham; but I hope and pray the Lord will sanctify all to your profit. If it depended upon me, you should have nothing to grieve you for a moment; but I am glad our concerns are in his wise and gracious hands, who appoints us a mixture of afflictions and trials, not because he takes pleasure in giving us pain, (our many comforts afford sufficient proofs of his goodness,) but because he sees that troubles are often better for us than the continual enjoyment of our own wishes.

I am concerned to find you so very accessible to fears and alarms upon my account. Indeed I would not exchange the affection which gives rise to them for crowns and kingdoms. But why should you make yourself unhappy? Why distrust the good hand of God, which has so long preserved us? why should you take the course which, in the nature of things, is most likely to bring upon you the evil which you fear? Do not you consider that you yourself expose me to the greatest danger, by your sinful distrust of the Lord, and your over-much dependence upon a poor creature, who loves you, it is true, even as his own soul; but who, with the warmest desires of your happiness, is, in himself, quite unable to promote it; unable to procure you the smallest good, or to shield you from the greatest trouble. May it please God so to impress and fill your heart, that your supreme and undivided re-

gard may be fixed upon Him who alone is worthy. Then we shall be happy in each other indeed, when all our thoughts and aims are properly subordinate to what we owe to him. If we loved him with all our hearts, we should find it easy to trust him with our concerns. And then it would not greatly signify which of us went first to heaven, or by what means.

Let us, my dearest, pray for each other. Methinks we still wander in a wilderness, upon the very brink of a happy state, and yet cannot enter. How strange, that we who read of such a Saviour, who are acquainted with such promises, (made to the most unworthy,) and are so fully convinced of the reality of spiritual blessings; how strange is it, that we should be thus alternately elevated or cast down by trifles! that we should sit, like Hagar, lamenting over an empty vessel, when the fountain of life runs so near us! Keep this to read to me, when it may come to my turn to be pinched with unbelief. Perhaps you will soon have occasion to say, Physician, heal thyself.

I have had a pleasant walk this evening, and was enabled to pray for you, that you may gain a blessing upon all your removals, and be restored to me in peace. My pillow text to-night will be in Psal. xxxix. Suppose I take ver. 8. "Deliver me from all my transgressions, make me not the reproach of the foolish." How rich is the grace that has provided a ground for so great a petition as is expressed in the first clause! What arithmetic can compute the whole that is included in the word *all*. One generation would be sufficient to sink the soul into ruin. But the blood of Jesus Christ frees those who believe in him from the guilt of all. And his Spirit is sufficient to set us at liberty from the power of all sin, so that not one shall have dominion over us. Yet the supply of this Spirit is to be sought by earnest prayer; otherwise, notwithstanding what we know, and what we have received, we are liable to take such steps as would make us the reproach of the foolish.

Whenever you return, you will be welcome to me, as gold to the miser. But I hope to support the interval without being burdened. My days are filled up with employment, and at night I sleep soundly; so that no part of my time hangs upon my hands.

Olney, May 2.

METHINKS I see you just now. Your spirits sink a little, because you are taking leave of your sister and friends. I allow you to drop a tear or two. But I hope to-morrow, and before you have travelled many miles, you will resume your cheerfulness, and leave them and yourself in the hand of the Lord without

anxiety. He fitted your sister for the post he has assigned her, and, I trust, he will not only bless her, but make her a blessing to many around her. I sometimes think that the child's lameness may give such a different turn to his future life, may prevent so many things that might otherwise have happened, and give occasion to so many things which otherwise would not have happened, that, in the way of means, it may have a near connexion with the salvation of his soul. It is good to trust the Lord, and leave the management of all to him. He is wise. He sees to the end of our path. We, poor, short-sighted creatures, cannot see an inch before us, and if left to our own choice, should involve ourselves in troubles by the very steps we should take to prevent them.

I shall be glad to hear you are at London, because you will then be thirty miles nearer to me. But I remember when there were not only hills but oceans between us. Then the Lord brought us together in safety. It seems to me now, almost as if we had been separated for the time of an African voyage. But I wait with patience your summons to meet you at Newport. I would rather see you than all that the world accounts magnificent. I had rather hear you speak, than hear all Handel's music. I I would rather call you mine, than possess waggon-loads of gold. Some persons would deem this the language of folly; but it is the language of love and of truth.

It grows late. The maids are gone to bed, and I shall soon retire to mine. It is rather lonely at present; but, I thank God, I am a stranger to the remotest wish that it were lawful to me to have any companion but yourself. Since the Lord gave me the desire of my heart in my dearest M***, the rest of the sex are no more to me than the tulips in the garden. Oh, what a mercy is it, that I can say this! I speak it not to my own praise, but to the praise of the Lord. I have a vile heart, capable of every evil; and, in myself, am as prone to change as a weathercock. But, with respect to you, he has been pleased to keep me fixed, as the north-pole, without one minute's variation for twenty-four years, three months, and one day; and I humbly trust, that he will thus keep me to the end of my life.

Olney, May 4.

The wind blows hard at N. E. so that I suppose your brother and sister are embarked. If they are, I do not mean to be very uneasy for them; and I hope you will not. The God of the dry land is God of the sea likewise. He is as near us in a storm as in a calm; and we need his protection no less in a calm than in a

storm. May the Lord give to them and to us his grace; that, looking to him, we may be comforted under all separations and changes, by an assured hope of meeting, to unspeakable advantage, in a better world! We are all lessening the distance apace to our everlasting home. Our voyage through life will sometimes be incommoded by storms, but the Lord Jesus is an infallible, almighty pilot. The winds and the seas obey him. None ever miscarried under his care; and he takes charge of all who intrust themselves to him. Has he not made us willing to do so? Then we may be sure he will not disappoint the hope which he himself has given us. Let us make his good word our compass to direct our hearts to the haven, to the heaven, where we would be!

I need not wish time away; it flies with an amazing swiftness, even in your absence. But I hope it will be better with me when you return. I am not uncomfortable, but I am a little unsettled. I can do more business in two days when you are at home, than in three when you are abroad. For though I sit many an hour in my study without seeing you, yet to know that you are in, or about the house, and that I can see you when I please, gives a sort of composure to my mind: so that I must not say your company is a hinderance to me upon the whole; though occasionally my attention to you might make me leave something undone which I ought to have done. In short, whether with you or without you, I am a poor creature, and see much to be ashamed of every day, and in every circumstance

My comfort, and my care,
My safety, and my snare,
You have been, and you are!

However, I have great reason to bless God that I ever saw you.

Olney, May 9.

I AM very glad you heard and approved Mr. ****, and especially that you mean to call upon him. I hope you will pray and strive against those prejudices which your affection for me, and your jealousy lest any person should not look upon me with the same partiality which you do, have sometimes occasioned. These thoughts have been the greatest hurt to your spirit, and the greatest hinderance to your comfortable progress, of any thing that I know; and have sometimes given me no small uneasines. I cannot wish you to love me less, but I often wish you could be less anxious about me. Pray for me, that I may be simple, up-

right, and diligent, in my walk and work; and then you may cheerfully leave my concerns with the Lord, and may be assured that he will give me as much acceptance and favour as is good for me. Be upon your guard against making yourself, and of course me, uneasy about things which neither of us can help or alter. Temptations follow tempers; and Satan is always subtle and busy in his attempts to break our peace, and divert our thoughts from the main object. Though your company is my dearest and most valued earthly comfort, I shall be well repaid for a month's absence, if you bring home a desire to watch and pray against those wrong impressions which your love to me has sometimes obtruded upon your mind. And I hope to study myself the lesson I recommend to you; and to strive and pray for the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. But, alas! though I know in theory what a Christian should be, I am still sadly deficient in practice.

Give my love and thanks to all my kind friends. I was once without a friend; but God has since given me many. Who that had seen me at the Plantanes, would have expected what has since taken place? How unworthy am I of all that I have received! Very unworthy of being made happy in you; but above all, unworthy of the honour of preaching the Gospel, which I too long despised and blasphemed!

My evening walk was outwardly pleasant, but my mind was confused. However, I prayed for you. Let me be as I will in other respects, you are always present to my thoughts. My love has been growing from the day of marriage, and still it is in a growing state. It was once as an acorn, but it has now a deep root and spreading branches, like an old oak. It would not have proved so if the Lord had not watered it with his blessing.

Olney, December 21.

As you intimate you shall not come before Saturday, I write again. I need not wish the interval away, though I long to see you: Saturday will soon be here. I thank the Lord, and I thank you, for your letter. Indeed, he has been very gracious in supporting you and your father, so much beyond expectation; surely my heart has had a fellow-feeling with you. But such sorrow as he by his grace is pleased to sanctify, will be hereafter numbered amongst our mercies. I often speak much, in public, of his all-sufficiency to uphold, under every trial. I have seldom had a more remarkable proof of it, than in the course of this late affliction. May he enable you to improve this instance of his goodness,

as an argument against that vain reasoning of unbelief which has so often discouraged you. If he had not been with you, I am sure you would have been crushed like a moth. I hope, when we meet, we shall rejoice in his loving kindness; and that you will be able to say, "Because he has heard me, therefore I will call upon him as long as I life."

May we learn from what we have felt, and from what we daily see, of the vanity of all things here, to fix our thoughts upon the one thing needful; that we may experience his loving kindness to be better than life itself, and may have a sure resource in his love, against the pressure of every remaining trial that may be allotted us; that we may rejoice as those who are still liable to be called to mourn, and mourn as those who have a happy prospect of rejoicing for ever at last. I thought on Monday morning that I was praying for you, while you was stepping into the coach. But when you did set off yesterday, I was asleep. But the Shepherd of Israel, who neither slumbers nor sleeps, was pleased to watch over you in your journey; for which I desire to praise him. Sickness and death have entered many houses here since you left home. But we are still preserved. Our times are in the hand of him who careth for us.

I have had another peaceful night, and awoke this morning in health. I hope you can say the same. We lie down and arise in safety, because the Lord sustains us. Oh! to say, this God, this great God, is our God; our sun, and shield, and portion! What a privilege is this! What a conterbalance for every trial! And since he has said to our hearts, "Seek ye my face," and has given us a desire to answer, "Thy face, O Lord, will we seek," it is not possible that we should seek in vain. The Lord bless and keep you, lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace. Amen.

1775.

London, August 26.

I MUST send you a short letter for once. May the Lord bless you, give you composure of mind, and do you good every day. I know you will be ready enough to come to me when you can, and therefore I leave the *when* to you. I like Monday best, because it is nearest; but if you stay till Tuesday, I will wait patiently. But you know I am not quite the thing when you are absent. Methinks I would have you always at my elbow. Give my love to my dear child, who, I hope and believe, will be a good

girl. And I beg of her, and of all who are about her, that your rules, to which she so cheerfully submits when at home, may be broken as little as possible. Tell all her friends that I love her, and accept her as my own child, and shall account the care of her to be one of the most important concerns of my life.

Olney, November 18.

I BEGAN to listen at four for the sound of the horn. I listened till five before I heard it. Soon after I received your dear letter. My heart travelled with you from stage to stage, and I set you down in the Old Jewry, just at the time you mention. But, Oh! what cause have I to be thankful that you were shielded, by the Lord's protection, from the many possible events which might have spoiled my calculations, and sent me to bed to-night with an aching heart. I hope you are now at Chatham. I have put you into the Lord's hand, who I trust will do you good. Yet I cannot help being anxious till I know how you felt, and what you met with upon your arrival. If your dear father be still living, give my love and duty to him, and assure him that he is always in my thoughts and prayers. May the Lord support you, and keep up your spirits, by a sense of his power and goodness!

Olney, November 21.

I TOLD the people, on Saturday evening, my good news, and read your father's letter. Both he and you were earnestly prayed for. But I suppose more than a hundred were detained from us by colds and illness. There is scarcely a house without some person ill in it, and the general word is, that they never had such a sort of cold before. Many have taken to their beds; but in a few days most of them begin to amend.

W. and R. B**** sent me word, that their little girl was dying, and I have since heard she is dead. I expect to find them in much trouble. Thus, at one time or another, every family and every person finds vanity entwined with their choicest comforts. It is best for us that it is so. For, poor and vain as this life is, we are sufficiently attached to it. How strong, then, would our attachment be, if we met with no rubs or thorns by the way? Is not the history of every day a comment upon those words, "This is not your rest?" I think you and I must acknowledge that the Lord has given us, from the beginning of our union, a favoured lot: I think we have experienced as much of the good,

and as few of the evils of life, as any person whom we know. And yet, if we could fairly estimate all the pains, anxieties, and crosses we have met with, from first to last, it would make a considerable abatement in what, when taken in a more general view, may well be deemed a happy state. And how soon has the best of it passed away! Nothing now remains of many endeared hours, but the remembrance. Though we have had the best that such a life can afford, it would be a poor happiness indeed were this our all. But blessed be God, who has given us a better hope than we had when we set out. For, I think, we then proposed no higher satisfaction than we could find in each other. It was well for us both that I was constrained to leave you for three long voyages, for though those frequent separations were very irksome at the time, they were sanctified to make us look further. Oh! he has led us wisely and graciously! He has done all things well. We have nothing now to ask, but for a deeper and more thankful sense of his goodness.

Olney, November 26.

I AM thinking of you, and lifting up my heart for you, almost continually. You are in the Lord's school. He sent you to give you the most satisfactory proofs of his goodness to your father; which I hope will prove an encouragement, and a cause of great thankfulness, to yourself. He is very gracious, and, I trust, will show himself so to you, and in you. But you deprive yourself of comfort by listening to the voice of unbelief, which weakens your hands and prevents your progress. How often are you distressed, as though you were only to see the goodness of the Lord to others, and not to taste of it yourself! Yet the path of few people through life has been more marked with peculiar mercies than yours. How differently has he led us from the way we should have chosen for ourselves! We have had remarkable turns in our affairs; but every change has been for the better, and in every trouble, (for we have had our troubles,) he has given us effectual help. Shall we not then believe that he will perfect that which concerns us? When I was an infant, and knew not what I wanted, he sent you into the world to be, first, the principal hinge upon which my part and character in life was to turn, and then to be my companion. We have travelled together near twenty-six years; and though we are changeable creatures, and have seen almost every thing change around us, he has preserved our affections by his blessing, or we might have been weary of each other. How far we have yet to go, we know not; but the

greater and (as to externals) the pleasanter part of our journey is probably passed over. If our lives are prolonged, the shadows of the evening, old age, with its attendant infirmities, will be pressing upon us soon. Yet I hope this uncertain remaining part of our pilgrimage will upon the whole, be the best; for our God is all-sufficient, and can make us more happy by the light of his countenance, when our temporal comforts fail, than we ever were when we possessed them to the greatest advantage.

Olney, December 8.

When you told me that S**** was coming home, my heart sunk like a stone; but it soon revived upon finding you had altered your purpose. If she had come, I must either have sent her back again, or have set out myself to fetch you. If you were not where you are, she would be very useful to me here: I feel the want of her. But as things stand, you must either both come, or both stay; for I should not have one comfortable day if you were at Chatham alone. Every inconvenience will seem light, if compared with the thoughts of your being left by yourself. Your dear father is not acquainted either with my feelings or my situation; but you will do best to apprize him of both. As to your return, if there be good grounds to think that the time of his departure is near at hand, I ought not to desire it; but if the unexpected turn the physician speaks of should prolong his life, for months or years, and restore him to the same state in which you left him in September, your presence at home will soon be so necessary, that nothing but the most urgent call of duty can dispense with it. I speak not merely upon my own personal account; you are greatly wanted by the sick, by the poor, and by your family. There are many things to which I cannot attend as I ought, while you are away. I hope if your father recovers, so far as to bear a removal, he will give up business and come and live with us; and spend the remnant of his days amongst those who can join with him in talking of that better land to which he is going, and in praising the Lord for his goodness.

I hope nothing that I have written will make you uneasy. My mind has been a little agitated; but now I have put down my thoughts upon paper, I am composed again. Your absence is, indeed, a trial; but who am I, that I should not have trials? Ah! I have deserved much more than this; even to be broken, with breach upon breach, and to be deprived of you altogether. The Lord helps me in some measure, to resign all to his disposal, and to say, Not my will but thine be done. This separation is not like some

which we have formerly known : there are no oceans between us now, nor am I under a painful suspense, as when I could not hear of you for a whole twelvemonth. Even then he was pleased to watch over us ; to support us ; and restore us to each other, again and again. Therefore, my soul, hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him. Yea, I will praise him now, for his goodness to you. I know you have felt much : afflictions must be felt to be sanctified. But you have been strengthened according to your day. We seem, as I lately observed, to have had as smooth a journey, thus far, as most people. Yet, at intervals, our trials have been very sharp. Mine are always so when I feel for you ; though few things with which your peace or comfort are not connected, give me much trouble. I pay, at some seasons a heavy tax for loving you, I had almost said too well. But I cannot love you too well, unless I love you improperly. I believe it was of the Lord's goodness that I loved you at first ; and I am sure that both duty and gratitude bind me to love you now. The love which a husband should bear to a wife, is expressed in very strong terms by the apostle, Ephes. v. 25—28. But you certainly have been my idol ; and I often fear, you are too much so still. Alas! how difficult is it to draw the line exactly between undervaluing and overvaluing the gifts of God ! The good Lord pity and pardon us both, and take such a full possession of our hearts, that no rival may interfere with what is due only to him !

Olney, December 7.

If your letters (as you think) afforded me neither pleasure nor comfort, I should not so earnestly wish you to write ; but you may be assured they afford me both, and that, in your absence, nothing of a temporal kind can give me equal satisfaction. I usually grow thoughtful and absent about four o'clock, when I expect the post is coming, till I hear the horn ; then my spirits flutter. But when I receive a letter from you, have read it, and find you were well, I presently feel composed, and, I hope, a little thankful. Thus it was to-night. Glad I am to hear that your dear father is preparing to part with his house, and seems not unwilling to come to Olney ; where, I trust, he will find me heartily joining with you to do every thing in our power to make his remaining days comfortable.

The language of Psal. xl. 5. suits me well. There is no end to the inventory of my mercies. May he who has given so much to us, and done so much for us, add the crowning mercy of a thankful heart ! Though I can talk of thankfulness, I feel much

insensibility; but I know, that while sin dwelleth in me, it will have effects. It will distress, but it cannot condemn those who believe in Jesus. In Isaiah, xliii. 24, 25, we have a character of the Lord's salvation: it is free, for his own sake. It is full; the blotting out of sins, like a cloud, beyond recall and remembrance. And the subjects of this salvation are they who have wearied him by their iniquities.

Olney, December 23.

MANY prayers are offered for you; and I hope we shall soon have to offer praise. I pray, not only that we may be restored to each other, but that our long separation may be sanctified to us both. Though it has been a gentle trial, compared to what the Lord might justly have sent, and mingled with great mercies, yet a trial it is to me, and perhaps more so to you. Not that I mean to yield the palm to you, as if you can be more sensibly affected by absence than myself, but I allow my situation at home is more pleasant than yours while abroad. Considered as a trial, we have cause to be thankful that it has been so much sweetened; and we should likewise aim to draw some useful lessons from it. I hope I have learned some, if I can but practise them. I cannot feel how much I miss you, when you are from me but a few weeks without thinking what support I should need, if I was wholly deprived of you. The like thought, I suppose, is sometimes upon your mind. The hour will probably come, when we must experience the alternative of leaving, or being left. For though possible, it is not very likely, that we shall be removed both at once. May the Lord impress the event of this unknown hour upon our minds; not to distress us, but to keep alive in us a sense of the insignificancy of every thing here, compared with the one thing needful! May he cause our faith to grow and take deep root, and fix in us such a persuasion of his all-sufficiency and grace, and of our interest in his promises, that we may trust and not be afraid, but cheerfully commit all that is before us to his care. He who has supported us for weeks, can support us for years, and make those things tolerable which seem the most formidable in prospect. We are prone to be over-earnest about matters, which will one day appear to us of no more importance than the recollection of a dream. But, oh! the peace of God satisfies and fills the heart, and leaves but little room for anxious cares, or a warmth of spirit about trifles!

I acknowledge your kindness in sending me tolerable long letters, and by way of thanks, I have this time taken a large sheet

of paper, and will try to fill it. If I had leisure, and could find something to say, I would please myself with writing, not sheets, but quires. But I have many things to attend, and meet with hourly interruptions. When I awakened our dear little girl this morning, I asked her for a text, and she very promptly gave me Isa. xlii. 16, which contains an epitome of my own history and of yours also. How blind were we, when the Lord brought us together! How little did we then think of the paths, by which, and to which, he had purposed to lead us. But he caused light to shine upon our darkness, he has made a thousand crooked things straight before us, and we have good reason to trust his promise that he will not forsake us. Crooked things will occur in our path now and then; but, if he be with us, we need not fear. And the time is short. May we learn to speak the Psalmist's language from our hearts, "Lord! what wait we for? our hope is in thee." We have seen much of the good which this life, in a temporal view, can afford. We have felt enough of its evils to know that all here is mingled with vanity and vexation of spirit. And I trust, that before he removes us, he will make us heartily willing to go, that we may behold Him who shed his precious blood to redeem our souls.

Olney, December 26.

THE Lord is very good to me. He maintains my peace, and preserves me from evils and snares. But I feel much abomination in my heart. I can truly say, it is a cage of unclean and hateful birds. I dare not intrust any one, not even you, with a detail of the wild, foolish, and dreadful thoughts which often pester my mind. The Lord who is infinitely holy, sees all, yet he bears with me, and permits me, vile as I am, to call him mine. Is not this wonderful? Oh! he is full of grace and mercy! I hope you think and find him so.

Yesterday was a busy time, but I was led comfortably through. I had a good night, and slept this morning till past seven. I am sufficiently indulgent to Mr. Self. Do not fear my pinching or over-working him. I need a spur more than a bridle. You often think I do too much; I much oftener see cause to confess myself, comparatively at least, a slothful and unprofitable servant. In the concerns of immortal souls, with eternity in view, and so much depending upon the present moment, what assiduity or importunity can be proportioned to the case? I ought to be always upon the wing, seizing any opportunity of aiming to be useful, whether by word or pen; and, of course, much more careful and

diligent than I am to redeem the time. The Lord pity and pardon us all, and make us as wise in our generation as the men of the world are in theirs!

Olney, December 27.

We are all well, and therefore you need not be alarmed at my writing so soon. Mr. R**** called on me this morning, and when I spoke of my intended journey, he said he must go to London soon, and that if he could be of any service, he would suit his time to ours, and willingly conduct your father to Olney. When he first spoke, my heart answered, Thank you for nothing; I do not choose to miss the pleasure of seeing my dear M*** at least a whole week sooner than if I wait for her at home. But I soon considered, Mr. R**** is an active, strong man, who has his eyes and his wits about him, and could, perhaps, upon many occasions, be much more helpful to my father than I could. So I must mention this to her, and if she approves it, I must, for my father's sake, submit to stay a little longer before I see her. If you think that my coming will do as well or better, here I am waiting. Nothing but prudence, and a sense of duty here, would prevent my setting off towards you this night. I should much prefer it to going to bed. If it depended on my will only, I feel myself well disposed to take a journey of five hundred miles, for one day or half day of your company, if I could have it upon no easier terms. I need not multiply words; you well know that I cannot wish for an excuse to prevent my coming to you. But your father's safe and comfortable travelling is at present a chief object with me. I love him for his own sake; when he gave his consent that you should be mine, he laid me under an obligation which I can never repay; and over and above all this, he is your father.

1776.

Olney, January 7.

For fear the snow should prevent my being with you on Tuesday, I write a hasty line to tell you that we are all well.

I suppose, if Self had his will, he would think his journey to you of such importance, that no snow should have fallen to retard it, or make it inconvenient. Poor proud creature! What a presumptuous worm, to admit one thought against the appoint-

ment of the Most High; instead of being duly thankful that you and I are safely sheltered, and well provided for, in this severe weather! What hardships are some persons suffering this morning, while you, I hope, are sleeping peacefully in your bed, and I am sitting by a good fire. Far be it from us to repine, if in some things our inclinations are a little crossed. It is often, yea, always, in mercy when they are. We have seen it so in many instances already, and shall hereafter see that it was so in all.

Let me beg you not to give way to fears on my account, nor to calculate the depth of the snow at present; nor of the floods, when the snow shall melt. Since you have had an interest in me, the Lord has preserved me in the midst of many dangers, such as you can form no idea of. We may safely trust him now. His arm is not weary; he is always near us, and his providence watchful over those that fear him. But I know I cannot reason away your apprehensions, any more than I can my own when they are exercised about you. I will therefore direct my thoughts upward—Lord do thou keep her heart staid upon thee, and give her power to trust all in thine hand, and submit all to thy will! Amen.

Olney, January 9.

If I did not feel for your anxiety, I should be quite easy, for we are all well, and surrounded with mercies. I thought to be in London to-night, and with you to-morrow; but the Lord appointed otherwise. The greatest fall of snow I ever remember, has prevented me; but I might have been prevented by illness. Till ten or eleven this morning, I thought of making myself as easy as I could at home. But after the wagon came in, finding that the road was open to Newport, and it beginning to thaw, I supposed, if I could reach thither, I should find the high road passable enough. As I chalked it out, I was to reach St. Alban's by eight, set out from thence at four to-morrow morning, breakfast in London, and drink tea in the afternoon with my dearest M***. Accordingly, about noon we began our march. Mr. R**** led the van, I was in the centre, and Richard brought up the rear. He was designed to bring the horses home. I was a little concerned how he would be able to manage the three horses; but my concern was needless, for we returned as we went. The road from Newport was impassable to carriages. Neither chaise nor mail could move. I came safely home, well pleased that I had made the attempt, and only anxious lest you should be alarmed. I wish you may be able to drive away your fears upon my account, or rather pray them away. I am in safe hands. The Lord is my protector, and yours too. But if your painful feelings cannot be

avoided, may they be sanctified! My love is unwilling that you have an uneasy moment; but the Lord's love is not only tender, but wise.

Nor let us regret, that this fall of snow should prolong our separation. It fell by the direction of God's providence, both as to the time and the spot. And he likewise times our concerns, or the snow might have detained your father on the road, as I hear it has some company, who were glad to be sheltered in a small public-house by the road side, and can neither get backward nor forward. Come; all is well. We are, indeed, asunder; but I am not in Africa. How things are now we know. What unforeseen events the interposition of the snow may have prevented, we know not. As it is, the consciousness of loving and being beloved, remains with us; and this is better than every thing else would be without it.

Olney, January 20.

You say you cannot describe your uneasiness, when you neither saw me, as you expected, nor heard from me. I need no description. I felt it for you. I well know how you would be situated, unless you were apprised that the roads were stopped. Had the snow fallen with you as with us, you would have accounted for my not coming. I think no motive, less powerful than yourself, would have induced me to go to Newport when I did. It was at least an unpleasant ride; and I could not have managed it had I been alone. We were obliged in some places to quit the road, which was impassable, and to go round the open fields; and, at times, both the horse and his rider were almost buried in the snow. If either fatigue or expense could have prevented your anxiety, you would have had none. But I hope all is well over now.

It may help to make us patient, it should, indeed, make us thankful, to reflect upon the vast distress that multitudes are probably in, both by sea and land, at this moment while I am writing; some starving with cold, others with hunger, some lost in the snow, others dashing against the rocks. Ah, my dearest, how has sin filled the world with wo! And we are sinners like others; but our sufferings are light compared with what many endure, and still more light, if compared with our deserts. The Lord has done a great thing for us, in showing us the way of salvation. Here may our thoughts and desires chiefly fix. If sin be pardoned, if we are accepted in the Beloved, then He will guide us by the way, and heaven will be our portion at the end. And see! He is seated on a throne of grace, and ready to bestow every blessing that we need, more than our scanty minds can either ask or conceive. I

am at a distance from you. But, alas! what am I? If you were here, I could afford you no comfort or help, but by his blessing. But he can do you good without me. He can sensibly refresh you, or secretly support you, and be unto you as rivers of water in a dry place.

Olney, January 29.

I AM not surprised that you sometimes find it hard to be reconciled to your present situation. I was much comforted by the strain of cheerful submission expressed in your two former letters; but I know, from what passes in my own heart, that we cannot maintain such a resigned frame of spirit by any power of our own. I wish you, however, to look back a month or two, to the time when you feared something had happened to me. You then thought, if you could be sure that I was well, you could make light of every inconvenience. The present severe weather is a dispensation from the Lord. Thousands feel much more terrible effects from it than we have felt; and I know no ground of claim that we have to an exemption from a share in those trials to which all are exposed. May the Lord help us to submit and wait patiently; for, after all, we can alter nothing. We may make things worse, by a want of resignation, but we cannot mend them.

I acknowledge that your part of the trial has been the hardest; yet mine has not been light, especially if what I have felt for you be taken into the account. Yet, upon the whole, the Lord keeps my mind attentive to what I have deserved, and to what others suffer; so that, in the main, I am quiet and peaceful. If either you or I, or the dear child, had been ill, the trial would have been much greater; yet even then we could not have helped ourselves.

Olney, January 30.

WRITING to you is now almost the only thing to which I can attend. Let us try to be thankful that we are all well, and favoured with the necessaries and comforts of life. And let us pray that this separation, with all its inconveniences, may be sanctified. How often have I committed you and myself to the Lord, seemed willing that he should take his own methods with us, and that, in hope he would make all things work together for our good, I would never presume to say to him, What doest thou? And yet, when I think of your present distress, my spirits are so softened and affected, that I am ready to overlook my innumerable causes for thankfulness. I can easily see how this trial may be one of the *all*

things working together for our good; but it is his blessing must make it so. For if left to myself, I am capable of forgetting both corrections and comforts.

I am writing by a good fire, and while I almost burn on one side, I feel the frost on the other. How true is that word, "Who can stand before his cold?" And there is another good word, which I hope, in due time, to see fulfilled: "He sendeth forth his word and melteth them; he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow." He can make a speedy and powerful change in the weather. When he giveth his commandment, it runneth very swiftly. Such, likewise, is his power over the heart. He can give peace for trouble, heal our sorrows, revive our graces, and make us joyful in tribulation. If he speaks, it is done. He can bring real and enduring good out of seeming and transient evil, water out of rocks, and honey out of lions. Oh! that I could leave you, myself, and my all in his hands; be still, and know that he is God, and stand still to see his salvation. Remember me to Mr. K****. If he wants his house cleared, I want mine to be filled. But the Lord has interposed. We must not complain; if we do, we directly find fault with him who appointeth the seasons.

Olney, February 1.

Your mournful letter made me thoroughly uneasy, till this evening about eight, when I was supprized by a note, informing me that your father was at Newport, where they could not get a chaise, but wished to come to Olney to-night, if I could send one. You may guess how I ran and flew to get one. It set off soon; it is now ten o'clock, and I expect them in half an hour. Your being in the dumps threw me into the dumps deep enough. I was distressed for your uneasiness, but still hoped what I wrote last would prevent his coming. For I was filled with the most alarming apprehensions of your father's travelling in this weather. I thought the frost would seize his legs, and imagined I saw the chaise stopped in the snow, or overturned, and that he, incapable of helping himself, would be frozen to death. The messenger arrived more than an hour before your second letter, or it would have increased my fears, to have been informed that he was actually upon the road. I have not felt my own weakness, and want of dependence upon God, more sensibly in a great while. But I hope when he shall have brought us happily together, what we have suffered for each other, during these last eleven weeks, will be remembered by us with thankfulness, and to profit.

P. S. Your father arrived at half past ten, safe and well, as

full of spirits as a young man, or as if he had but just risen from bed. He is very well this morning, and so we are all; and every face about me looks more pleasant, as we now can form a reasonable hope of seeing you soon.*

1785.

London, Hoxton, August 6.

I LONG to hear that you had a comfortable journey to Southampton, and that you are now with our dear friends. Nothing has taken place among us that can be properly called new; which is a great mercy. For though you have been gone but one day, a single day, or a single hour, may produce painful alterations in a family. The Lord has preserved us through a long course of years, and in different situations, from various calamities which have overtaken others. Our obligations to thankfulness are singular and numerous. When the chaise drove past the corner, my heart seemed to go away with it. It contained what was of more value to me than the cargoes of a whole East-India fleet. Tell Eliza that I love her very dearly. I feel parting with you and with her; but I can cheerfully submit to any thing that may, by the Lord's blessing, contribute to her recovery or relief. She would soon be well if I could make her so. But she is in better hands than mine. I have a comfortable hope that her illness has been, and will be, sanctified to an end far more desirable than health or life itself. Therefore I leave her to the wise and merciful direction of the Lord, who, I trust, loves her better than I can.

I cannot write a long letter to-night. What could I, indeed, say, if I had more time, that I have not said a thousand times over? Yet there still is, and will be, something unsaid in my heart, which I have not words to express. May the Lord bless this little separation to quicken us to mutual prayer, and to lead us to a thankful review of the mercy and goodness which have followed us through the many years we have been united. How many turns have we seen! Under how many trials have we been supported! How many deliverances have we known! How many comforts have we enjoyed! Especially, what great advantages have we possess-

* From the above period we were seldom separated. And the few letters I wrote were short and contained little that I can deem worth transcribing. I add the following, written after our removal to London, when the illness of our dear Eliza Cunningham made a journey to Southampton necessary. I subjoin them chiefly as a testimony of the Lord's goodness in preserving our affection from being diminished by the increase of years. I believe I was not absent from her more than a day or two at a time, after the date of the last, till she finished her course.

ed, for seeking and knowing the things which pertain to our everlasting peace! The years we have passed together will return no more. The afflictions are gone, the pleasures likewise are gone, for ever. The longer we live, such pleasures as this world can afford will, more and more, lose their power of pleasing. Only our love, I trust, will subsist and flourish to the end of life, yea, beyond it. It will always be a truth, that the Lord, in giving me you, gave me the best temporal desire of my heart. But the shadows of the evening advance. Old age is growing upon us, and the days are approaching when we shall have no pleasure but what we can derive from the good word of God, and the consolations of his Holy Spirit! These, if we are favoured with them, will sufficiently compensate for the abatement, or the loss, of all the rest. The streams may run dry, but the fountain of living waters will always flow. May his presence be near our hearts, and then all will be well!

I am too fully employed to feel time hang heavy upon my hands in your absence; and if I am permitted to come to you, the thoughts of the journey's end will make the journey pleasant.

Hoxton, August 13.

I THANK the Lord and you for the comfortable account of your arrival at Southampton, without meeting any harm in the way; and that you found our dear friends well. We entreated the Lord to take care of you; and he has heard our prayer. How often has he heard and answered us! Oh! that we may, at length, learn to trust him without anxiety. I believe I shall find it difficult to procure a supply for my church. But if the Lord pleases to let me see my dear friends at Southampton, while you are with them, ways and means will be found. His will must take place; and I should be sorry to move a step without it.

I long to hear that dear Eliza has been in the water, and how it agrees with her. The Lord can give it the virtue of the pool of Bethesda. If he sees it best for her on the whole, she will find relief. He knows what is best for her; I do not. But I had much rather see her as she is, than in full health and spirits, if careless and fond of dissipation, as is too frequently the case with girls at her age. To bear the yoke in youth, is not pleasant to the flesh; but it has often proved a blessing to the soul.

I commend you both to the Lord and to the word of his grace; I wish you much of that peace which passeth understanding, particularly in this respect, and it has no necessary dependence upon

outward things. If we wait upon him, we are sure to be remembered with the favour which he bears to his own people. We have much to be thankful for in this life: yet there is a thread of vanity runs through the whole of it; for He who has done and suffered so much for our happiness, does not design that we should be quite happy here.

Hoxton, August 17.

I THANK my dear friends for their great kindness to you; tell them that I should be glad to be with you, to share in it. But I cannot come, with propriety, at present. I hope Eliza will be able to bathe soon; and as you are upon the spot, I think you must wait a while. Dependence and submission, in the use of prudent means, are our parts; events are in the hand of God. It was right that you should go to a proper place, whether she can bathe or not, now she is there, because the attempt was thought adviseable. And if bathing would be useful, I think she will yet be able. If not, you have acted to the best of your judgment. What we call disappointments, are dispensations, which, if rightly improved, will answer valuable purposes, and we shall hereafter see cause to be thankful for them. I am willing to think that I love Eliza almost, if not altogether, as well as you do. But there is an over anxiety attending your love, which hurts you, and can do her no good. Your reflections upon this subject please me. I would do, I would suffer, much for her advantage. But still we are creatures. Our Lord God has an absolute right to dispose of us, and of ours, as he sees fit. And as he is sovereign, so he is wise and good. It is a great mercy to be enabled to yield to his will; for every thing, and every heart, must either bend or break before it.

What shall I say by way of close? What, but breathe out the warmest wishes of my heart to you and for you. Daily, and often, I thank the Lord for giving you to me at first, and for sparing you to me so long. How very different would the history of my life have been, if yours had not been connected with it! That my idolatrous regard had so happy an issue, and that my sin and folly have not yet deprived me of you, are proofs of his singular mercy to me. I have innumerable comforts to be thankful for; but my heart is so intimately united to you, that I scarcely seem susceptive either of pleasure or pain, but with some reference to you. Thus it was when our union commenced, and thus it has been every day since, to this hour. If I could say, with confidence, that I hold you now in your proper place of subordi-

nation to Him who gave you to me, then I need not scruple to profess that your peace, your welfare, and your love, are dearer to me than all earthly things. The latter I can say with truth; I hesitate about the former. I fear you are too much my idol still. The good Lord pardon me in this thing. My choicest comfort has been, too often, the occasion of showing me the evil and ingratitude of my heart in the strongest light. Oh! that we may both have grace to live the remainder of our days to Him! Do, my dearest M***, pray for me, pray earnestly for me; and may He return all the good you can ask for me a thousand fold into your own bosom!

Hoxton, August 23.

I THANK you for your letter; and I thank the Lord that dear Eliza is able to bathe. May his blessing attend every means for her relief; and, especially, may her soul prosper! she and you are daily and hourly remembered. You express the very sentiments of my heart. I am well and comfortable in the main; but there is a want of something, when you are absent, which no creature can make up. I hope we shall meet to praise him soon: but, I believe, I must wait till after the fourth of September. I hope I shall then procure a proper supply for a Sunday or two. If it be the Lord's good pleasure that I shall come to you, it will be made practicable.

I cannot but wish, with you, that we may not be separated again; but it is of more importance to wish and pray that our present separation may be sanctified to us. Many things offer to amuse us: some deserve and require a degree of our attention; but one thing is especially needful. What a mercy is it that this one thing, which mountains of gold and silver cannot purchase, is to be had without money and without price! May the Lord engrave it deeply on your heart and mine! His name is Love; his word is Power. As sure as the sun will rise to-morrow, so sure is his promise, that he will in no wise cast out them that come unto him. If we have a desire for his blessings, he first gave it us, and therefore will not disappoint us. I long to see and hear you rejoicing in his salvation. He only knows the many prayers I have offered for you; I trust not in vain. I cannot doubt but the one thing needful is your chief desire. Every thing else will shortly fail us; but the blessing of the Gospel will last through life, through death, and to eternity.

Hoxton, August 27.

I LAID me down in peace, and awoke in safety; for the Lord sustained me. He is about our path by day, and our bed by night, and preserves us from innumerable evils, which would come upon us every hour, if his watchful providence did not protect us. He is our sure, though invisible, shield; therefore, we are unhurt, though, in ourselves we are weak and defenceless, like a city without walls or gates, and open to excursions from every quarter. Could we but live more sensible of his goodness, and maintain that feeling of gratitude towards him which we do to some of our fellow-creatures, we should be happy. For what is the great design of the Gospel? Is it not to introduce us into a state of the most honourable and interesting friendship, and to perpetuate to us the pleasure which we find in pleasing those who are dearest to us? The Lord Jesus is our best friend: his character is supremely excellent, our obligations to him are inexpressible, our dependence upon him is absolute, and our happiness, in every sense, is in his hands. May our love, therefore, be fixed upon him, and we shall do well. He will guide us with his eye, guard us by his power, and his fullness and bounty will supply all our wants.

As to dear Eliza, I hope I have made up my mind about her. If her recovery could be purchased, I think I would bid as high for it as my ability would reach, provided it was the Lord's will. But I am so short-sighted, that I dare not ask for the continuance of her life, (nor even of yours,) but with a reserve of submission to his wisdom. I know not what might be the possible consequences, if I could have my own will. I know he can restore her, and I believe he will, if it be for the best. If not, I desire to submit, or rather, to acquiesce, to be satisfied. I shall feel for myself if she be removed; and probably my feelings will be doubled and accented upon your account. But he can support us, and sanctify the painful dispensation to us both. I pray to be enabled to entrust and resign every thing to him. This is not an easy lesson to flesh and blood; but grace can make it practicable. For the rest, if she should be taken off in a moment, I have reason to be quite easy about the event, as to herself. And if she should decline gradually, I have little doubt but the Lord will enable her to speak to the comfort and satisfaction of all about her. She is in his wise and merciful hands; and there I am content to leave her.

Hoxton, September 1.

It is a maxim with me, when I can hope my intention is right, to make myself as easy as possible about consequences. I did not apprehend that Eliza had finally given up bathing: and Mr. T****'s kind letter confirmed my determination to visit you. I therefore took places early in the Diligence that I might not be daily pestered with an anxious fear of being too late, and thereby disappoint you. I know the way of man is not in himself; I believe the Most High Lord condescends to direct the steps of those who depend upon his guidance; and I am aware that a thousand events, unforeseen and unthought of, may depend upon our movements. On these grounds I prayed him to direct me; and I am satisfied. If we come down to Southampton before you leave it, I shall be ready to return with you the next morning, if you think proper. Every thing will easily give way to my attention to dear Eliza.

Though Monday is the day on which I hope to meet our society, this was not the reason why I fixed to set off on Tuesday. I am not fond of travelling on a Monday, when I can avoid it. The thoughts of something relative to the journey might intrude and discompose my mind on the Lord's day, which I love to enjoy as quietly as possible; and, after the services of that day, a good night's rest is desirable. I thought, if I changed my bed on Sunday evening, and rose at four the next morning, I might not come to you so well and composed as I hope I shall on Tuesday. Otherwise, neither that society nor any company in the kingdom should detain me a day from you, unnecessarily, when you expect me, and after a month's absence. I think of our hoped-for meeting on Tuesday next with much the same anticipation of pleasure, as when I have formerly been on the return to you from an African voyage. What difference there is, I compare to the difference between the blossom and the fruit. The blessing of the Lord upon our connection has, in the course of thirty-five years, ripened the passion of love into a solid and inexpressibly tender friendship; which, I trust, in its most valuable properties, will subsist for ever. I shall never find words fully to tell you how much I owe you, how truly I love you, nor the one half of what my heart means, when I subscribe myself,

Your most affectionate and obliged husband.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

A Relation of some Particulars, respecting the Cause, Progress, and Close of the last Illness of my late dear Wife.

Among my readers, there will, doubtless, be some of a gentle, sympathizing spirit, with whom I am not personally acquainted; and perhaps their feelings may so far interest them in my concerns, as to make them not unwilling to read a brief account of my late great trial. I shall allot a few pages to this purpose, by way of close to my book, and to my history.

My dear wife had naturally a good constitution, and was favoured with good spirits to the last. But the violent shock she sustained in the year 1754, when I was suddenly attacked by a fit (I know not of what kind) which left me no sign of life, for about an hour, but breathing, made as sudden a change in her habit, and subjected her, from that time, to a variety of chronic complaints. She was several times confined, for five or six months, to her chamber, and often brought so low that her recovery was deemed hopeless. I believe she spent ten years out of forty that she was spared to me, (if all the days of her sufferings were added together,) in illness and pain. But she had likewise long intervals of health. The fit I have mentioned (the only one I ever had) was the mean the Lord was pleased to appoint in answer to my prayers, to free me from the irksome seafaring life in which I was till then engaged, and to appoint me a settlement on shore.

Before our removal from Liverpool, she received a blow upon her left breast, which occasioned her some pain and anxiety for a little time, but which soon wore off. A small lump remained in the part affected, but I heard no more of it for many years. I believe that, latterly, she felt more than I was aware of; but her tenderness for me made her conceal it as long as possible. I have often since wondered at her success; and how I could be kept so long ignorant of it.

In the month of October, 1788, she applied unknown to me, to a friend of mine, an eminent surgeon. Her design was, if he approved it, to submit to an operation, and so to adjust time and circumstances with him, that it might be performed in my absence, and

before I could know it. But the surgeon told her that the malady was too far advanced, and the tumour (the size of which he compared to the half of a melon) was too large to warrant the hope of being extracted, without the most imminent danger of her life, and that he durst not attempt it. He could give her but little advice, more than to keep herself as quiet, and her mind as easy, as possible; and little more encouragement, than by saying, that the pains to which she was exposed were generally rendered tolerable by the use of laudanum: to which, however, she had a dislike, little short of an antipathy.

I cannot easily describe the composure and resignation with which she gave me this recital, the next day, of her interview with the surgeon; nor of the sensations of my mind while I heard it. My conscience told me that I had well deserved to be wounded where I was most sensible; and that it was my duty to submit with silence to the will of the Lord. But I strongly felt, that unless he was pleased to give me this submission, I was more likely to toss like a wild bull in a net, in defiance of my better judgment.

Soon after, the Lord was pleased to visit our dear adopted daughter with a dreadful fever, which, at first, greatly affected her nerves, and afterwards became putrid. She was brought very near the grave indeed; for we, once or twice, thought her actually dead. But he, who in the midst of judgment remembers mercy, restored her, and still preserves her, to be the chief temporal comfort of my old age, and to afford me the greatest alleviation of the loss I was soon to experience, that the case could admit.

The attention and anxiety occasioned by this heavy dispensation, which lasted during the whole of a very severe winter, were by no means suited to promote that tranquility of mind which my good friend wished my dear wife would endeavour to preserve. She was often much fatigued, and often much alarmed. Next to each other, this dear child had the nearest place both in her heart and mine. The effects were soon apparent: as the spring of eighty-nine advanced, her malady rapidly increased; her pains were almost incessant, and often intense, and she could seldom lie one hour in her bed in the same position. Oh! my heart, what didst thou then suffer!

But in April, the God who heareth prayer mercifully afforded relief; and gave such a blessing to the means employed, that her pains ceased. And though, I believe, she never had an hour of perfect ease, she felt little of the distressing pains incident to her malady from that time to the end of her life, (which was about twenty months,) excepting at three or four short intervals, which, taken together, hardly amounted to two hours: and these returns of anguish, I thought, were permitted to show me how much I

was indebted to the goodness of God for exempting her feelings, and my sympathy, from what would have been terrible indeed!

In the close of the summer, she was able to go to Southampton, and returned tolerably well.

She was twice at church, in the first week after she came home. She then went no more abroad, except in a coach, for a little air and exercise; but she was cheerful, tolerably easy, slept as well as most people who are in perfect health, and could receive and converse with her kind friends who visited her.

It was not long after, that she began to have a distaste for food, which continued and increased; so that, perhaps, her death was at last rather owing to weakness from want of nourishment, than to her primary disorder. Her dislike was, first, to butcher's meat, of which she could bear neither the sight nor the smell. Poultry and fish, in their turns, became equally distasteful. She retained some relish for small birds, a while after she had given up the rest; but it was at a season when they were difficult to obtained. I hope I shall always feel my obligations to the kind friends who spared no pains to procure some for her, when they were not to be had in the markets. At that time I set more value upon a dozen of larks, than upon the finest ox in Smithfield. But her appetite failed to these also, when they became more plentiful.

Under this trying discipline I learnt, more sensibly than ever, to pity those whose sufferings of a similar kind are aggravated by poverty. Our distress was not small: yet we had every thing within reach that could, in any degree, conduce to her refresment or relief; and we had faithful and affectionate servants, who were always willingly engaged to their power, yea, as the apostle speaks, beyond their power, in attending and assisting her by night and by day. What must be the feelings of those who, when afflicted with grievous diseases, pine away, unpitied, unnoticed, without help, in a great measure, destitute of common necessaries? This reflection among others, contributed to quiet my mind, and to convince me that I had still much more cause for thankfulness than for complaint.

For about a twelvemonth of her confinement, her spirits were good, her patience was exemplary, and there was a cheerfulness in her looks and her language that was wonderful. Often the liveliness of her remarks has forced a smile from us, when the tears were in our eyes. Whatever little contrivances she formed for her amusement in the course of the day, she would attend to nothing till she had finished her stated reading of the Scripture; in which she employed much time and great attention. I have her bible by me, (which I would not part with for half the manu-

scripts in the Vatican,) in which almost every principal text, from the beginning to the end of the book, is marked in the margin with a pencil, by her own dear hand. The good word of God was her medicine and her food, while she was able to read it. She read Dr. Watts' Psalms and Hymns, and the Olney Hymns in the same manner. There are few of them, in which one, two, or more verses, are not thus marked; and in many, which I suppose she read more frequently every verse is marked.

But in October, the enemy was permitted, for a while, to take advantage of her bodily weakness, to disturb the peace and serenity of her mind. Her thoughts became clouded and confused; and she gradually lost, not only the comfortable evidence of her own interest in the precious truths of the bible, but she lost all hold of the truth itself. She doubted the truth of the Bible, or whether the truth existed. And, together with this, she expressed an extreme reluctance to death; and could not easily bear the mort distant hint of her approaching end, though we were expecting it daily and hourly. This was the *acme*, the high-water mark of my trial; this was hard to bear indeed.

My readers, perhaps, will scarcely believe that I derived some consolation, during this gloomy period, from perceiving that her attachment to me was very sensibly abated. She spoke to me with an indifference of which, a little before she was incapable. If, when the Lord's presence was withdrawn, and she could derive no comfort from his word, she had found some relief from my being with her, or from hearing me speak, I should have been more grieved. Her affection to me, confirmed by so many proofs in the course of forty years, was not to be impeached by this temporary suspension of its exercise. I judged the same of the frame of her mind, as to her spiritual concerns; I ascribed them both to the same causes, her bodily weakness, and the power of temptation. She was relieved in both these respects, after about a fortnight spent in conflict and dismay. The Lord restored peace to her soul; and then her former tenderness to me immediately revived. Then, likewise, she could calmly speak of her approaching dissolution. She mentioned some particulars concerning her funeral, and our domestic concerns, with great composure. But her mind was not so fully restored to its former tone, as to give her freedom to enlarge upon her hopes and views as I had wished, till near her dissolution; and then she was too low to speak at all.

One addition to our trial yet remained. It had been her custom, when she went from the sofa to her bed, to exert herself for my encouragement, to show me how well she could walk. But it pleased the Lord, that by some alteration which affected her spine, she was disabled from moving herself; and other circum-

stances rendered it extremely difficult to move her. It has taken five of us near two hours to remove her from one side of the bed to the other; and, at times, even this was impracticable: so that she has lain more than a week exactly in the same spot, without the possibility of changing her position. All this was necessary on my account. The rod had a voice; and it was the voice of the Lord. I understood the meaning no less plainly than if he had spoken audibly from heaven, and said, "Now contemplate your idol: now see what she is, whom you once presumed to prefer to Me!" Even this bitter cup was sweetened by the patience and resignation which he gave her. When I said "You suffer greatly," her answer usually was, "I suffer, indeed, but not greatly." And she often expressed her thankfulness, that though her body was immoveable, she was still permitted the use of her hands.

One of the last sensible concerns she felt respecting this world was, when my honoured friend, patron, and benefactor, the late John Thornton, Esq. of Clapham, was removed to a better. She revered and regarded him, I believe, more than she did any person upon earth; and she had reason. Few had nearer access to know and admire his character; and perhaps none were under greater, if equal obligations to him than we. She knew of his illness, but was always afraid to inquire after the event; nor should I have ventured to inform her, but that the occasion requiring me to leave her for four or five hours, when I hardly expected to find her alive at my return, I was constrained to give her the reason of my absence. She eagerly replied, "Go, by all means; I would not have you stay with me upon any consideration." I put the funeral ring I was favoured with into her hands; she put it first to her lips, and then to her eyes, bedewing it with her tears. I trust they soon met again. But she survived him more than a month.

Her head became so affected, that I could do little more than sit and look at her. Our intercourse by words was nearly broken off. She could not easily bear the sound of the gentlest foot upon the carpet, nor of the softest voice. On Sunday the twelfth of December, when I was preparing for church in the morning she sent for me, and we took a final farewell as to this world. She faintly uttered an endearing compellation, which was familiar to her, and gave me her hand, which I held while I prayed by her bed-side. We exchanged a few tears; but I was almost as unable to speak as she was. But I returned soon after, and said, "If your mind, as I trust, is in a state of peace, it will be a comfort to me if you can signify it by holding up your hand." She held it up, and waved it to and fro several times.

That evening her speech, her sight, and, I believe, her hearing, wholly failed. She continued perfectly composed, without taking notice of any thing, or discovering any sign of pain or uneasiness till Wednesday evening, towards seven o'clock. She then began to breathe very hard: her breathing might be called groaning, for it was heard in every part of the house; but I believe it was entirely owing to the difficulty of expiration, for she lay quite still, with a placid countenance, as if in a gentle slumber. There was no start or struggle, nor a feature ruffled. I took my post by her bedside, and watched her nearly three hours, with a candle in my hand, till I saw her breathe her last, on the 15th of December, 1790, a little before ten in the evening.

When I was sure she was gone, I took off her ring, according to her repeated injunction, and put it upon my own finger. I then kneeled down, with the servants who were in the room, and returned the Lord my unfeigned thanks for her deliverance and her peaceful dismission.

How wonderful must be the moment after death! What a transition did she then experience! She was instantly freed from sin, and all its attendant sorrows, and, I trust, instantly admitted to join the heavenly choir. That moment was remarkable to me likewise. It removed from me the chief object which made another day or hour of life, as to my own personal concern, desirable. At the same time it set me free from a weight of painful feelings and anxieties, under which nothing short of a divine power could have so long supported me.

I believe it was about two or three months before her death, when I was walking up and down the room, offering disjointed prayers from a heart torn with distress, that a thought suddenly struck me, with unusual force, to this effect:—"The promises of God must be true; surely the Lord will help me, *if I am willing to be helped!*" It occurred to me, that we are often led, from a vain complacence in what we call our sensibility, to indulge that unprofitable grief which both our duty and our peace require us to resist to the utmost of our power. I instantly said aloud, "Lord, I am helpless indeed in myself, but I hope I am willing, without reserve, that thou shouldest help me."

It had been much upon my mind, from the beginning of this trial, that I was a minister, and that the eyes of many were upon me; that my turn of preaching had very much led me to endeavour to comfort the afflicted, by representing the Gospel as a catholicon, affording an effectual remedy for every evil, a full compensation for every want or loss to those who truly receive it; so that though a believer may be afflicted, he cannot be properly unhappy, unless he gives way to self-will and unbelief. I had often

told my hearers that a state of trial, if rightly improved, was to the Christian a post of honour, affording the fairest opportunity of exemplifying the power of divine grace, to the praise and glory of the Giver. It had been, therefore, my frequent daily prayer, that I might not, by impatience or despondence, be deprived of the advantage my situation afforded me, of confirming, by my own practice, the doctrine which I had preached to others, and that I might not give them occasion to apply to me the words of Eliphaz to Job, ch. iv. 4, 5. "Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou has strengthened the feeble knees; but now it is come unto thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled!" And I had not prayed in vain. But from the time that I so remarkably felt myself *willing to be helped*, I might truly say, to the praise of the Lord, "My heart trusted in Him, and I was helped" indeed. Through the whole of my painful trial, I attended all my stated and occasional services, as usual; and a stranger would scarcely have discovered, either by my words or looks, that I was in trouble. Many of our intimate friends were apprehensive that this long affliction, and especially the closing event, would have overwhelmed me; but it was far otherwise. It did not prevent me from preaching a single sermon, and I preached on the day of her death.

After she was gone, my willingness to be helped, and my desire that the Lord's goodness to me might be observed by others, for their encouragement, made me indifferent to some laws of established custom, the breach of which is often more noticed than the violation of God's commands. I was afraid of sitting at home, and indulging myself by poring over my loss; and therefore was seen in the street, and visited some of my serious friends the very next day. I likewise preached three times while she lay dead in the house. Some of my brethren kindly offered their assistance; but as the Lord was pleased to give me strength, both of body and mind, I thought it my duty to stand up in my place as formerly. And after she was deposited in the vault, I preached her funeral sermon,* with little more sensible emotion than if it had been for another person. I have reason to hope that many of my hearers were comforted, and animated under their afflictions, by what they saw of the Lord's goodness to me in my time of need. And I acknowledge that it was well worth standing a while in the fire, for such an opportunity of experiencing and exhibiting the power and faithfulness of his promises.

I was not supported by lively sensible consolations, but by being enabled to realize to my mind some great and leading truths

* From a text which I had reserved, from my first entrance into the ministry, for this particular service, if I should survive her, and be able to speak.

of the word of God. I saw, what indeed I knew before, but never till then so strongly and clearly perceived, that, as a sinner, I had no right, and, as a believer, I could have no reason to complain. I considered her as a loan, which He who lent her to me had a right to resume whenever he pleased; and that as I had deserved to forfeit her every day from the first, it became me rather to be thankful that she was spared to me so long, than to resign her with reluctance when called for. Further, that his sovereignty was connected with infinite wisdom and goodness; and that consequently, if it were possible for me to alter any part of his plan, I could only spoil it—that such a short-sighted creature as I, so blind to the possible consequences of my own wishes, was not only unworthy, but unable to choose well for myself; and that it was therefore my great mercy and privilege that the Lord condescended to choose for me. May such considerations powerfully affect the hearts of my readers under their troubles, and then I shall not regret having submitted to the view of the public, a detail which may seem more proper for the subject of a private letter to a friend. They who can feel for me, will, I hope, excuse me. And it is chiefly for their sakes that I have written it.

When my wife died the world seemed to die with her, (I hope to revive no more.) I see little now, but my ministry and my Christian profession, to make a continuance in life, for a single day, desirable; though I am willing to wait my appointed time. If the world cannot restore her to me, (not that I have the remotest wish that her return was possible,) it can do nothing for me. The Bank of England is too poor to compensate for such a loss as mine. But the Lord, the all-sufficient God speaks, and it is done. Let those who know him, and trust him, be of good courage. He can give them strength according to their day; he can increase their strength as their trials are increased, to any assignable degree. And what he can do, he has promised he will do. The power and faithfulness on which the successive changes of day and night, and of the seasons of the year, depend, and which uphold the stars in their orbits, is equally engaged to support his people, and to lead them safely and unhurt (if their path be so appointed,) through floods and flames. Though I believe she has never yet been (and probably never will be) out of my waking thoughts for five minutes at a time; though I sleep in the bed in which she suffered and languished so long; I have not had one uncomfortable day, nor one restless night, since she left me. I have lost a right hand, which I cannot but miss continually, but the Lord enables me to go on cheerfully without it.

May his blessing rest upon the reader! May glory, honour, and praise be ascribed to his great and holy name, now and for ever! Amen.

No. II.

VERSES SUNG AFTER HER FUNERAL SERMON.

HABAK. iii. 17, 18.

Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

1 The earth with rich abundance stor'd
To answer all our wants,
Invites our hearts to praise the Lord,
For what his bounty grants.

2 Flocks, herds, and corn, and grateful fruit,
His gracious hand supplies;
And while our various tastes they suit,
Their prospect cheers our eyes.

3 To these he adds each tender tie
Of sweet domestic life;
Endearing joys, the names imply,
Of parent, husband wife!

4 But sin has poisoned all below,
Our blessings burdens prove;
On ev'ry hand we suffer wo,
But most where most we love.

5 Nor vintage, harvest, flocks, nor herds,
Can fill the heart's desire;
And oft a worm destroys our gourds,
And all our hopes expire.

6 Domestic joys, alas! how rare!
Possess'd and known by few!
And they who know them, find they are
As frail and transient too.

7 But you, who love the Saviour's voice,
And rest upon his name,
Amidst these changes may rejoice,
For he is still the same.

8 The Lord himself will soon appear,
Whom you, unseen, adore;
Then he will wipe off ev'ry tear,
And you shall weep no more.

No. III.

EBENEZER:

A MEMORIAL OF THE UNCHANGEABLE GOODNESS OF GOD UNDER CHANGING DISPENSATIONS.

No. I.

Written on Feb. 12, 1775.—The Twenty-fifth Anniversary of our Marriage.

THE LORD GAVE.—

1 For what this day recalls to mind
My praise to God is due;
How many blessings he design'd
To give, in giving you.

2 When hateful, hating, and forlorn,
In Afric's wilds I stray'd;
His hand secur'd my safe return,
But *you* the *mean* was made.

3 How little, then, could be foreseen
My path in future life!
But he prepar'd each following scene,
By making you my wife.

4 The happy day that join'd our hands
(Sweet prelude to his grace,)
More firm in my remembrance stands
Than if engrav'd in brass.

5 But, ah! my heart, by sin betray'd,
(How painful is the thought,)
Soon of the gift an idol made,
The Giver soon forgot.

6 How justly might some sudden turn
Have parted us again ;
And left my guilty soul to mourn
In agony and pain !

7 But though we both, and chiefly I,
For good have render'd ill,
His mercy hath been always nigh,
His hand preserves us still.

8 With mutual love, and peace, and health,
And friends, we have been blest ;
And if not what the world calls *wealth*,
We have *enough* possess'd.

9 From place to place, from year to year,
The Lord has been our guide ;
Our sure resource in time of fear,
When all has fail'd beside.

10 Thus five-and-twenty years the sun
Has trod his annual path ;
And we apace are posting on
To meet the stroke of death !

11 Sure, none a happier life have known,
Than ours, thus far hath been ;
But could we covet, now 'tis gone,
To live it o'er again ?

12 Like checker'd cloth, the warp with love
And comfort has been spread ;
But cares and crosses, interwove,
Have furnish'd half the thread.

13 Yes ! even we, who so much joy,
So much endearment, know,
Have found that something will annoy
And tarnish all below !

14 Yet ev'ry cross a mercy is,
A blessing every thorn,
That tells us, here is not our bliss,
We were for nobler born.

15 That I am hers, and she is mine,
Invites my feeble lays;
But, Saviour, that we both are thine,
Demands my highest praise.

16 With thee, dear Lord, who rulest all,
The wise appointment lies,
To which of us the lot must fall,
To close the other's eyes!

17 Then all our intercourse while here,
(How happy, and how kind!)
Will like a fleeting dream appear,
Which leaves no trace behind.

18 Prepare us, ev'ry day we live,
For that important hour;
And when, at length it shall arrive,
Support us by thy pow'r.

19 Who first departs, may thy kind smile
Strengthen with joy to go;
And the survivor reconcile
To stay awhile below.

20 Then, may it seem of little weight,
Which of us goes before;
Assur'd that we shall shortly meet
To part again no more.

21 Oh, with what wonder, joy, and praise,
Our souls shall then review
The snares and mercies of the ways
We were conducted through.

No. 2.

Written on December 15, 1791.—The First Anniversary of her Dismission from this State of Sin and Sorrow.

THE LORD HATH TAKEN AWAY. BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD

2 Cor. i. 3, 4.

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

1 Lord! she was thine, and not my own,
Thou hast not done me wrong;
I thank thee for the precious loan
Afforded me so long.

2 For though no single day has been.
Or talent, well improv'd;
I chiefly see, and mourn, my sin
In what I chiefly lov'd.

3 I trembled, when thou saidst "Resign
"A much-abused trust;"
But could not wonder, or repine;
I own'd the sentence just.

4 Yet mercy sweeten'd my distress;
And, while I felt the rod,
Gave me abundant cause to bless
An all-sufficient God!

5 Sharp was my pain, and deep my wound,
(A wound which still must bleed,)
But daily health and strength I found,
Proportion'd to my need.

6 Like Jonah, (well our stories suit)
I view'd my gourd, well pleasd;
Like him, I could not see the root
On which the worm had seiz'd.

7 But saw, at length, the hour draw nigh
(That hour I since have known)
When all my earthly joy must die,
And I be left alone.

8 She dropp'd a tear, and grasp'd my hand,
And fain she would have spoke;
But well my heart could understand
The language of her look.

9 Farewell, it meant a last adieu!
I soon shall cease from pain;
This silent tear I drop for you;
We part—to meet again.

10 I said, "If leaving all below,
"You now have peace divine;
"And would, but cannot, tell me so,
"Give me, at least, a sign."

11 She rais'd, and gently wav'd her hand,
And fill'd me with a joy,
To which the wealth of sea and land
Compar'd, were but a toy.

12 I trust, indeed, she knew thy grace
Before this trying day;
But Satan had, a while, access,
To fill her with dismay.

13 Till then, through two long years she pin'd,
Without an hour of ease;
Cheerful she still appear'd, resign'd,
And bore her cross in peace.

14 Daily, while able, closely too,
She read the word of God;
And thence her hope and comfort drew,
Her med'cine and her food.

15 A stranger might have well presum'd
From what he saw her bear;
This burning bush was not consum'd,
Because the Lord was there.

16 Three days, she could no notice take,
Nor speak, nor hear, nor see;
O Lord, did not my heart-strings ache?
Did not I cry to thee,

17 That while I watch'd her, night and day,
My will to thine might bow ?
And, by this rod, didst thou not say,
" Behold your idol now !

18 " From her you lov'd too much, proceed
" Your sharpest grief and pains ;
" For, soon or late, the heart must bleed
" That idols entertains."

19 Yes, Lord, we both have guilty been,
And justly are distress'd ;
But since thou dost forgive our sin,
I welcome all the rest.

20 Only uphold us in the fire,
Our fainting spirits cheer ;
And I thy mercy will admire
When most thou seem'st severe.

21 Fainter, her breath, and fainter grew,
Until she breath'd her last ;
The soul was gone before we knew
The stroke of death was past.

22 Soft was the moment, and serene,
That all her suff'rings clos'd
No agony or struggle seen,
No feature discompos'd :

23 The parting struggle all was mine ;
" 'Tis the survivor dies :"
For she was freed, and gone to join
The triumph of the skies.

24 To me it was a stormy day,
Though glad for her release ;
But he whom seas and storms obey,
Soon bid the tempest cease.

25 My selfish heart had wish'd her here,
To spend her days in pain ;
That she what I could say might hear,
And speak to me again.

26 Our kindness to our suff'ring friends
Would keep them still below ;
But He who loves them better, sends,
And at his call they go.

27 Each moment, since that trying hour,
My loss I keenly feel;
But trust I feel my Saviour's pow'r
To sanctify and heal.

28 Ah, world, vain world! by whom my Lord
Was crucifi'd and slain,
What comfort now canst thou afford
To mitigate my pain?

29 Long since, I should, by his dear cross,
Have learnt to die to thee;
But if I learn it by my loss,
That loss my gain will be.

30 Now, Lord, to thee I would apply,
On thee alone depend;
Thou art, when creatures fail and die,
An ever-living friend!

31 Now thou hast made a void within,
Which only thou canst fill;
Oh! grant me pardon of my sin,
And grace to do thy will.

32 That I with joy thy flock may feed,
A pattern to them be,
And comfort them in time of need,
Vouchsafe to comfort me.

33 Let me believe, and love, and praise,
And wonder, and adore,
And view thee guiding all my ways;
I ask for nothing more.

34 To thee I would commit the rest:
The when, the how, the where,
Thy wisdom will determine best,
Without my anxious care.

35 May I with faith and patience wait,
For soon thy call will come;
When I shall change this mortal state
For an eternal home.

36 The vails of sin and unbelief
Shall then be rent in twain;
And they who parted here with grief,
Shall meet, with joy, again.

37 Then will the Lord himself appear
With all his blood-bought sheep,
To wipe from ev'ry face the tear,
And they no more shall weep.

38 May thoughts like these relieve my toil,
And cheer my spirit up!
Who would not suffer here a while,
For such a glorious hope?

No IV.

SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE 15TH DECEMBER, 1792.

1 While grace her balm, to soothe my pain
And heal my wound, applies;
To make it throb and bleed again,
Officious mem'ry tries.
Too well she knows each tender string
That twines about my heart;
And how to fix a piercing sting
In the most feeling part!

2 May I not yet some respite take
From dwelling on her death?
Did I not feel her heart-strings break,
And watch her last drawn breath?
Oh! cease, at length, to haunt my mind
With images of grief;
Canst thou no pleasing topics find
To yield me some relief?

3 But as a sieve the bran retains,
And lets the flour fall through,
So careful mem'ry keeps my pains
And loss in constant view;
While comforts, countless as the sands,
Which crown my favour'd lot,
Though each my warmest praise demands,
Are heedlessly forgot.

4 And can I then forget the times,
When helpless, hopeless, lost,
I pin'd in miseries and crimes,
On Afric's horrid coast?

To Christ, my Lord, a daring foe,
To men a wretched slave;
Yet, on that brink of endless wo,
He show'd his power to save.

5 His mercy, though by me unsought,
Kept me from falling in;
His arm my full deliv'rance wrought,
His grace forgave my sin.
He taught my base, blaspheming tongue
To aim at pray'r and praise;
Became my shield, and strength, and song,
And guided all my ways.

6 Thus, freed from misery and death,
My sorrow chang'd to joy;
He sent me forth to preach the faith
I labour'd to destroy.
His mercies, through my future life,
Were new from day to day;
The chief of all, was that dear wife
He since has call'd away.

7 Shall one so favour'd e'er repine?
Or one so vile complain?
No—let me praise—she long was mine,
And shall be mine again.
If death could break our union past,
(Frail, though endear'd the tie,)
The stronger band of grace shall last,
When death itself shall die!

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE LAST LONDON EDITION.

THE Executors of the late REV. JOHN NEWTON feel highly gratified in presenting to the public a complete edition of his works.

The greater part of the present volume consists of letters, intended by the Author as a continuation of CARDIPHONIA. These were selected by himself, and transcribed under his own direction, and some of them very carefully revised. The Executors would gladly have availed themselves of the kind offers of his correspondents to increase the collection, but could not consistently with the injunction of their revered Friend, who expressly desired that none might be printed except those which were selected during his life-time.

The remainder of this volume is occupied partly by papers extracted, according to the Author's direction, from Periodical Publications; and partly by small pieces printed during his life, but never before collected, and concerning which no instructions were given by the deceased.

THESE PIECES ARE,

A Sermon, preached on a public occasion, in the year 1800.
Thoughts upon the African Slave Trade.
Addresses to the Inhabitants of Olney, and St. Mary Woolnoth, London. And
A Letter on Political Debate.

The Thoughts on the African Slave Trade may appear to some a temporary publication, but the Executors regard it as an important historical document, by one who had been personally engaged in the traffic, and was well acquainted with its horrors; as such it will be read with interest by posterity.

The Addresses to the Inhabitants of Olney and St. Mary Woolnoth, show the Author's earnest and constant attention to the eternal interests of all his parishoners; and at the same time furnish useful examples to clergymen, of the different means which may be used to promote the welfare of their people, and of the different style and manner of address which may be adopted.

The Letter on Political Debate, is part of a friendly correspondence which took place between the Author and a Minister in the country in the year 1793. It contains some important and interesting considerations on the subject, and was therefore deemed worthy of preservation.

These are all the works published or prepared for the press by the Author, excepting only the Life of the Rev. Mr. Grimshaw, the copyright of which was given to the SOCIETY FOR RELIEVING POOR PIOUS CLERGYMEN OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

The Executors commend the whole to the blessing of Almighty God, calling upon every reader to unite with them in fervent prayer that God would raise up many, who, like his departed servant, may be examples to the believers IN WORD, IN CONVERSATION, IN CHARITY, IN SPIRIT, IN FAITH, IN PURITY.

Letters

TO VARIOUS PERSONS,

INTENDED AS A SEQUEL

TO

CARDIPHONIA.

EIGHTEEN LETTERS

TO

SEVERAL LADIES.

LETTER I.

To Miss M****.

September 10, 1760.

DEAR MADAM,

I ADDRESS my letter to you, but consider myself as writing to the whole of the little society I had the pleasure of meeting at your house, and at Miss K****'s. I still reflect with pleasure on the opportunities I was favoured with among you: and if, as I hope, my little visits were not unacceptable to each or any of you, let us not lose a moment in apologies or compliments to each other, but refer the whole praise where it is wholly due. Salvation, in its whole extent, and in each particular step, is of the Lord. Though we can but lisp a little word about his goodness, yet when he is pleased to be near us, his presence and blessing can work by the meanest instruments, and cause our hearts to burn within us. On the other hand, when he withdraws, we can no more help each other than we can help ourselves: then, the very best of us prove miserable comforters, fruitless teachers, and blind guides. Could I bring my heart to this point, to regard myself as insufficient to think one good thought, or to speak one profitable word, any further than as influenced by that enlivening Spirit which Jesus is exalted on high to bestow, I should be well; but, alas! I am often hurt by a fond desire of being or doing something considerable; and this, so often as it prevails, like a sudden fatal blast, spoils my fairest blooming prospects of comfort and usefulness. It is a great point to be constant and diligent in the use of all appointed means, and yet to have our souls waiting only upon God, in a deep persuasion that neither the best means, nor the closest attendance upon them, can do any thing for us in themselves; and that nothing short of renewed communications from him, can either satisfy or sanctify our hearts.

The best advice I can send, or the best wish I can form for you, is, that you may have an abiding and experimental sense of

those words of the apostle which are just now upon my mind—"LOOKING UNTO JESUS." The duty, the privilege, the safety, the unspeakable happiness of a believer, are all comprised in that one sentence. Let us first pray that the eyes of our faith and understanding may be opened and strengthened; and then let us fix our whole regard upon him. But how are we to behold him? I answer, in the glass of his written word; there he is represented to us in a variety of views; the wicked world can see no form nor comeliness in the portraiture he has given of himself; yet, blessed be God, there are those who can "behold his glory, as the glory of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth;" and while they behold it, they find themselves "changed into the same image, from glory to glory," by the transforming influence of his Spirit. In vain we oppose reasonings, and arguments, and resolutions, to beat down our corruptions, and to silence our fears; but a believing view of Jesus does the business. When heavy trials in life are appointed us, and we are called to give up, or perhaps to pluck out a right eye, it is an easy matter for a stander-by to say, "Be comforted;" and it is as useless as easy—but a view of Jesus by faith, comes home to the point. When we can fix our thoughts upon him, as laying aside all his honours, and submitting, for our sakes, to drink off the bitter cup of the wrath of God to the very dregs; and when we further consider, that he who thus suffered in our nature, who knows and sympathizes with all our weakness, is now the supreme disposer of all that concerns us, that he numbers the very hairs of our heads, appoints every trial we meet with in number, weight, and measure, and will suffer nothing to befall us but what shall contribute to our good—this view, I say, is a medicine suited to the disease, and powerfully reconciles us unto every cross. So, when a sense of sin prevails, and the tempter is permitted to assault us with dark and dreadful suggestions, it is easy for us to say, "Be not afraid;" but those who have tried, well know, that looking to Jesus is the only and sure remedy in this case—if we can get a sight of him by faith, as he once hung between the two thieves, and as he now pleads within the vail, then we can defy sin and Satan, and give our challenge in the apostle's words, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again; who also maketh intercession for us:" Rom. viii. 34. Again, are we almost afraid of being swallowed up by our many restless enemies; or, are we almost weary of our long pilgrimage through such a thorny, tedious, barren wilderness? A sight of Jesus, as Stephen saw him, crowned with glory, yet noticing all the sufferings of his poor servants, and just ready to receive them to himself, and make them partakers of his everlasting joy, this will

raise the spirits, and restore strength; this will animate us to hold on, and to hold out; this will do it, and nothing but this can. So, if obedience be the thing in question, looking unto Jesus is the object that melts the soul into love and gratitude, and those who greatly love, and are greatly obliged, find obedience easy. When Jesus is upon our thoughts, either in his humbled or his exalted state, either as bleeding on the cross, or as worshipped in our nature by all the host of heaven, then we can ask the apostle's question with a becoming disdain, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" God forbid. What! shall I sin against my Lord, my love, my friend, who once died for my sins, and now lives and reigns on my behalf: who supports, and leads, and guides, and feeds me every day? God forbid. No; rather I would wish for a thousand hands, and eyes, and feet, and tongues, for ten thousand lives, that I might devote them all to his service: he should have all then; and surely he shall have all now! Alas, that in spite of myself there still remains something that resists his will! but I long and pray for its destruction, and I see a day coming when my wish shall be accomplished, and I shall be wholly and for ever the Lord's. I am your affectionanate servant.

LETTER II.

To Miss M****.

November 2, 1761.

My Dear Sister,

Your letter was welcome and comfortable. I praise the Lord on your behalf, and shall not cease to pray, "that you may be filled with his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;" that you may go on "to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things;" and that a sense of his presence and power "who so loved us as to wash us from our sins in his own blood," may be your establishment, and strength, and comfort, continually. You have reason, indeed, to praise him, and so have I. O what a wonder of grace, that he should say to those who were children of wrath, "Behold, I go to my Father, and to your Father, to my God, and to your God." Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends;" and as a proof of it, "Ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." Here are words sufficient either to raise our souls up to heaven, or to bring heaven down into our soul, according to that glorious promise which to many is fulfilled even in our day. Rev. xxi. 3.

Let us not be greatly discouraged at the many tribulations, difficulties, and disappointments which lie in the path that leads to glory: seeing our Lord has told us before; has made a suitable provision for every case we can meet with, and is himself always near to those that call upon him; a sure refuge, an almighty strength, a never-failing, ever-present help in every time of trouble; seeing, likewise, that he himself was a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief for our sakes. He drank off the full cup of unmixed wrath for us; shall we then refuse to taste of the cup of affliction at his appointment? especially when his wisdom and love prepare it for us, and proportion every circumstance to our strength; when he puts it into our hands, not in anger, but in tender mercy, to do us good, to bring us near to himself; and when he sweetens every bitter draught with those comforts which none but he can give. Let us rather say, None of these things move us, neither do we count any thing on this side eternity dear, so that we may finish our course with joy, and run with patience the race which is set before us.

The time is short:—the world is passing away; all its cares and all its vanities will soon be at an end. Yet a little while and we shall see him who has found a way to make us love him, though we have not yet beheld him—"we shall see him, as he is," every vail will be taken away, every seeming frown be removed from his face, and every tear wiped away from ours. We shall also be like him. Even now, when we contemplate his glory as shining in the glass of the Gospel, we feel ourselves, in some measure, transformed into the same image; what a sudden, wonderful, and abiding change shall we then experience, when he shall shine directly, immediately, and eternally upon our souls without one interposing cloud betweeen; because he lives, we shall live also:—because he shines, we likewise shall shine forth as the sun, in our Saviour's brightness; then shall we sing with understanding those glorious songs, Isaiah, xii. lxi. 10. Rev. v. 9. and vii. 10. without one jarring note, or one wandering thought for ever.

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord:" "Let us lay aside every weight;" "Let us not be slothful," but followers of that cloud of witnesses who in every age have set their word to the truth and power of God. They were once as we are now: they had their complaints and their fears, their enemies and temptations; they were exercised with a wicked heart, and a wicked world; and I doubt not but many of them, in a fit of unbelief, have been ready to conclude, "I shall one day perish by

the hand of Saul;" but at length, the "blood of Jesus, and the word of his testimony," made them more than conquerors, and now their warfare is finished, they are "before the throne of God and the Lamb, and shall go no more out." While we are sighing, they are singing; while we are fighting, they are triumphing; but their song, their triumph, their joy, will not be complete till we are called up to join them. The Lord prepare us for, and hasten the happy hour.

The strain of your present experience requires you, above all others, to be humble and watchful, and I trust you are so. However, it is our duty to exhort one another daily. One of the greatest contradictions in human nature, and the very strongest proofs of our depravity, is that the communication of extraordinary measures of divine comforts, which in their own nature have a direct tendency to humble, has, through our corruptions, sometimes a contrary effect; not in the present moment, indeed that is impossible, but afterward. Paul himself was liable to danger in this matter. See 2 Cor. xii. 7. You will do well, therefore to entreat the Lord to give you a double guard on this side, to keep you in continual remembrance what you were by nature, and what you still are in yourselves. We are often forced to buy this recollection by bitter experience.

Again, be watchful:—many eyes are upon you. Satan envies you. Oh! he hates to see any persons, especially young persons, walking very closely with God. So far as he is permitted, he will spread snares for your feet every hour: he desires to have you, "that he may sift you as wheat." Further, the world observes you; many would rejoice at your halting; and a little thing in you would give them more pleasure and advantage in opposing the truth, than a greater slip in some others who are content to plod on in the common way. Nay, it is well if there are not some even among yourselves, professors and members who would be glad to see you brought down to a level with themselves, since they cannot persuade themselves to join and imitate you. These things you know without my telling you, and I do not mention them to discourage you. No, were every leaf upon the trees, and every blade of grass a sworn enemy to our souls, we are safe under the shadow of our great Rock: the blessing is his, and he will not withhold it; but the appointed means are our part, and it is our wisdom and happiness to be found waiting on him in the use of them.

Yours, &c.

LETTER III.

To Miss M****.

April 5, 1761.

DEAR MADAM,

I DESIRE to praise God on your behalf, and frequently to remember you both at the throne of grace; I may say each of you, for, as I understand Miss S**** is now returned to Y———, I consider her as a part of my correspondence. I hope the Lord is with her likewise, and that she can, by sweet experience, set her seal to that comfortable truth, that all things, both shall, and do, work together for the good of those that love God.

Things continue much with us as they were when I wrote last. For myself, I every day have proof that the Lord is gracious, merciful, and kind. I hope my experience in some measure corresponds with yours; I say, in some measure; for I think you rather describe what I would be than what I am. Blessed be his name for a taste, though it be but a taste, of the water of life. I long for fuller draughts, and I trust he has given me that hungering and thirsting after his righteousness which shall at length be satisfied, and which cannot be satisfied with any thing short of his love. Often I cry out, "Oh! remember me with the favour thou bearest to thine own people." I know there are heights and depths in communion with God, to which many of his dear children are admitted, which are far beyond my present attainments; but this rather encourages me than otherwise; for they (even the very best of them) were once as poor as myself, and have nothing now, any more than I, that they can call their own; and he who has done so much for them, is rich enough to do as much for me; the fountain of grace, though overflowing, is ever full; and as the sun shines as easily and powerfully on ten thousand, as upon a single person, so the Sun of Righteousness can enlighten and comfort all his children with one single glance of his love. I desire to praise his name for what he has already shown me, and to hope in his mercy that I shall yet "see greater things than these."

As I have nothing particular to impart of my own, I shall transcribe part of a letter I lately received from a young woman a relation of mine in London. She is not a member of a congregational church, but a hearer of Mr. Jones. She used to make herself merry at my expense for being what she called a Methodist. After the Lord awakened her, she walked three years in the valley of the shadow of death, almost without a glimpse of hope. How it is

with her now, I shall give you in her own words. She writes thus among other things, for I have not time to give you the whole:—

"All the glory to himself who is worthy; I find the Lord better to me than all my hopes, and all my fears. Though I am often beset with temptations of various kinds, from without as well as from within, yet my gracious Lord gives me to wrestle with him till he gets the better for me, for it is not in *me*. I know, and blessed be the Lord for teaching me, that I am but a poor, weak, helpless creature; but he strengthens me, and blesses me, and gives me to rejoice in him almost all the day long. Though I have not always love, and joy, and peace alike, yet I have not let him go since I wrote to you last. I can hold him fast, and I pray, and hope, and trust I ever shall. I believe 'my Beloved is mine, and I am his.' From what I have found already, I dare not doubt his love or his power: though, to my shame be it spoken, I too often wander from my God, if not in word or deed, yet, alas! my heart too often betrays me. I find the Lord to be a jealous God, who will not accept of a divided heart; and, indeed, if I know any thing of myself, it is the whole desire of my soul to give up all and every thing, myself, my soul, my body, my health my strength, my friends, my all, as a willing sacrifice into his hand. I bless my God for such a disposition, and often find the sweets of it; and I always find that the more watchful I walk, the more comfortable I am." She then adds, "I believe it is a month since I wrote the above; and thanks and praises to my dear Lord, I have had much of his presence and love in my heart ever since. I find that stupidity and deadness which I have had much of in times past, greatly removed. The Lord has kept my soul so open to prayer that I can pray and praise all the day long. I never find any thing keeps me so low at the throne of grace, as a sense and feeling of the loving kindness of the Lord to my soul; it makes me nothing, it so empties me of self. It is not a sense of sin without the love of God, will humble me; I think that only makes me peevish and dissatisfied; but when the Lord lifts up the light of his countenance upon me, then it is that every thing in me falls low at his footstool. I have found such power lately as I never had before; I used to be as ready to yield to temptation as the devil was to tempt, but now, (all the glory be to him that gives me this power,) I find that word to be faithful and true, 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.' When temptation besets me, instead of reasoning with the enemy till I lose all the Lord has given me, I flee to Christ, and tell him how it is with me, and cry mightily to him till he makes me more than conqueror."

I hope this little extract from my cousin's letter will be acceptable. I have several from her in the same strain, for she is not now in what is called the warmth of her first love, but has been walking comfortably in the Lord's way three or four years past; I think, indeed, every letter discovers a growth upwards in knowledge and love, and downwards in humility. May the Lord enable us so to do. Yours, &c.

LETTER IV.

To Miss K****.

June 1, 1761.

DEAR MADAM,

I FREQUENTLY reflect with pleasure on our little interviews the last year, I trust the Lord was with us of a truth. Surely my heart burned within me, and I have, and shall have, much reason to bless the Lord for those sweet and unexpected opportunities. The remembrance of them has exceedingly engaged my heart to you both, and to Miss S****. I think a sight of the very ground we walked over together would bring to my mind much of what occurred in our conversation. May the same gracious Lord enable me so to write, and you to read, that we may experience a fellowship in spirit, and may drink plentifully of the refreshing streams of his love and grace.

It gives me much pleasure to hear that the Lord leads you into the green pastures of his love, so that you are constrained to cry out, "How great is his goodness! How great is his beauty!" May he show you yet greater things than these, and make your soul fresh and flourishing, as a tree planted by a continual stream. Then I am sure you will love, and serve and praise him; you will not be ashamed of his name and cause; you will not be backward to speak for him; you will not find fault with any of his dispensations; in a word, then your life and conversation will be a proof of your heavenly calling, and all who behold you will be constrained to acknowledge that you have been with Jesus indeed.

This is the way, and there is no other to glorify him in the world. We know, from experience, how little reading, and hearing, and resolving, can do for us, when the Lord is absent, and our hearts in a hard and stupid frame. Alas! how can we render, unless we first receive? But, oh! when his Spirit and power is with us, what a delightful surprising change! then old

things become new, hard things easy; and out of weakness we are made strong! then our enemies attempt in vain to bind and ensnare us; he enables us to run through their troops, to leap over their walls, to esteem their darts and swords as straw and rotten wood, and to go forth in his strength, conquering and to conquer. I hope my letter will find you in this experience, with your bow abiding in force, and your enemies under your feet, and may it long continue. This is a privileged, glorious state indeed; but it calls for much watchfulness and prayer. The Lord expects a particular closeness and obedience from those whom he thus delights to honour, and Satan watches with envy and rage to find an opening by which to assault such a soul.

I hope you will remember, that all your comfort and prosperity depends upon keeping near to him who is the sun, the shield, the life of his poor children, and that neither experiences, knowledge, nor attainments, can support us, or maintain themselves, without a continual supply from the fountain. This supply is to be kept up by constant prayer; and prayer will languish without continual watchfulness. I trust you will bear me to put you in mind of these things, though you know them. We are yet in an enemy's country, and are directed to exhort one another daily, lest we be surprised by some stratagem and guile of our bitter adversary, who has many thousand snares and instruments to employ against us, and well knows how to use them to the most advantage, and to avail himself of our weak side. Yet we need not fear him, if we take, and keep, and use the whole armour of God, and remain under the shadow of that Rock which is higher than ourselves.

As to me, the Lord deals gently with me:—my trials are few and not heavy, my experiences run in a kind of even thread, I have no great enlargements, and am seldom left to great darkness and temptation: I am often wandering away, but the Lord seeks me out, and brings me back from time to time, much sooner than I could expect. I am enabled, through grace, to keep myself from the evil of the world, so that I have not been left to bring a blot on my profession. But, alas! my heart is a filthy, defiled heart still. It is well that he who only knows how to bear with me, knows what is within me. My comfort is comprised in this one sentence—"I know whom I have believed"—I know that Jesus is mighty to save; I have seen myself lost in every view but the hope of his mercy; I have fled to him for safety; I have been preserved by him thus far; and I believe he will keep that which I have committed to him even to the end. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and praise, be to his name, who hath loved poor sinners, and washed them in his most precious blood! Amen. For

the rest, alas! alas! I am unfaithful and unprofitable to a degree you would hardly believe; yet, vile as I am, I taste of his goodness every day, and live in hope, that in his own time he will enable me to show forth his praise. I have been much exercised with respect to the ministry; my heart is led that way, but the Lord's hand keeps me in; I need much humbling; there is that in me which seeks great things, though I am, as I said, sadly unfaithful in small ones; therefore, for my pride, I am set aside for the present. I hope you will help me with your prayers; entreat the Lord to empty me of all creature-dependence, that I may live to him alone. I am your unworthy servant.

LETTER V.

To Miss M****.

May 25, 1762.

MY DEAR MADAM,

How can I begin better than with the apostle's words; "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all consolation, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." What a fountain of life, and joy, and praise is here! that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ should vouchsafe to be our Father, our God; that he who is the source of all mercy and consolation, should direct the stream of his fulness to flow into our souls: that when we were dead in sins, he should look upon us and bid us live: that when we were sunk into the depth of despair, he should send his word and raise us to a lively hope; that he should give us such a bright prospect, and such a sweet foretaste of the exceeding riches of his glory. Oh! who can say which is the most wonderful part of this wonderful subject? that he should provide such a happiness for such hell-deserving wretches, and that he should commend his great and undeserved love to us in such a wonderful way, as to give his own and his only Son to be born, to be buffeted, to be crucified for us. Alas! alas! for our stupidity, that we can write, or hear or speak of these things, with so little feeling, affection, and fruitfulness. Oh! that the power of God would set my heart and pen at liberty while writing, and fill your hearts while reading, that we may rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory! Oh, this unbelief! Why can we not pierce through the vail of flesh and blood, and by faith behold

the humble worship of heaven? What countless multitudes have gone before us in the path that leads to that kingdom! They were, in their time, followers of an unseen Saviour, as we are now; but now they see him as he is, face to face, in all his glory, and in all his love; with them are joined the innumerable hosts of angels. Angels and saints, however distinguished, are joined in one happiness and one employment. Even now, while I write, and while you read, they are praising the Lamb that was slain, and casting their crowns at his feet. And perhaps this scene is not so far distant as we imagine. Where is heaven? Is it some millions of leagues from us, far beyond the sun and the fixed stars? What have immortal spirits to do with space or place? Who knows but a heaven-born soul, who is freed from the clog of this vile body, and filled with all the fulness of God, may pass as easily and quickly from one verge of the creation to the other, as our thoughts can change and fly from east to west, from the past to the future? Perhaps, even now, we live in the midst of this glorious assembly; heaven is there where our God and Saviour displays himself; and do not you feel him near you, nearer then any of his visible works? Perhaps there is nothing but this thin partition of flesh and blood between us and those blessed spirits that are before the throne; if our eyes were open, we should see the mountains around us covered with chariots and horses of fire: if our ears were unstopped, we should hear the praises of our great Immanuel resounding in the air, as once the shepherds heard. What a comfortable meditation is this to strengthen our weak faith in such a dark declining day as this, when sense would almost persuade us that we are left to serve God alone. When we are wearied with looking on careless sinners and backsliding professors, let us remember that we have invisible friends present in our assemblies, our conferences, and our closets, who watch over us, and in ways which we cannot possibly conceive, are helpers of our joy, and witnesses of our conflicts. They are with us now, and we shall soon be with them. Ah! how little does the vain world think of the privileges and the company in which a believer lives! and, what is worse, how faintly do we think of these things ourselves! and this is the reason we are so full of fears and complaints, so prone to distrust the Lord's methods of dealing with us, and so easily drawn aside to seek for something to rest upon in creatures like ourselves.

With respect to my own experience, I have little now to add to what I have formerly offered; at least, little variety: for, in one sense, every new day is filled up with new things;—new mercies on the Lord's part, new in gratitude on mine; new instances of the

vileness of my nature, and new proofs of the power of sovereign, pardoning grace :—new hills of difficulty, new valleys of humiliation ; and now and then, (though, alas ! very short and seldom,) new glimpses of what I would be, and where I would be. The everlasting love of God ; the unspeakable merits of Christ's righteousness ; and the absolute freeness of the Gospel promises ;—these form the threefold cord by which my soul maintains a hold of that which is within the vail. Sin, Satan, and unbelief, often attempt to make me let go and cast away my confidence, but as yet they have not prevailed ; no thanks to me, who am weaker than water : but I am wonderfully kept by the mighty power of God, who is pleased to take my part, and therefore I trust in him that they never shall prevail against me. A vile sinner, indeed, I am ; but since God, who alone has a right to judge, is pleased to justify the believer in Jesus, who is there that shall dare to condemn ? I bless the Lord for that comfortable portion of scripture, Zech. iii. 1—5. When the Lord is pleased to pluck a brand out of the fire to save it from perishing, what power in heaven or earth shall presume or prevail to put it in again ? No ; he has done it, and who can reverse it ? He has said it, and his word shall stand. And I humbly believe (Lord help my unbelief) that not one good thing shall fail of all that the Lord my God has, in his word, spoken to me of.

Yet, alas ! I must still charge myself with a great want of watchfulness and diligence ; the enemy cannot destroy my foundation, but he spreads many nets for my feet, to weaken me, and to interrupt my peace ; and, to my shame I must confess, he too often prevails. The Lord, in great mercy, preserves me from such sins as would openly dishonour my profession ; and a mercy I desire to esteem it, for I can infer from my heart what my life would be if I were left to myself. I hate sin ; I long to be delivered from it, but it is still in me, and works in me. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me ?" I bless God for Jesus Christ my Lord. To his grace I commend each of you. I am yours.

LETTER VI.

To Miss M****.

September 18, 1762.

DEAR MADAM,

I REJOICE to find that the Lord prospers his work in your hearts, and that you can say, from experience, he is a faithful and

good Shepherd. Oh! happy they who are in such a case, who know for themselves how good it is to draw near unto him, to sit down and rest under his refreshing shadow, and feast upon his pleasant fruits!

Through grace I also continue waiting on him after my feeble measure; and I trust in his love, that, though I sometimes faint, I shall not utterly fall; though I too often step aside, he will not suffer me to wander quite away.

There is, indeed, an evil heart of unbelief that would lead me I know not whither; but, oh! what a precious mercy to be walled in on every side by everlasting love and free grace! Do not your hearts rejoice in that word, "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms?" And if he is pleased and engaged to uphold us, what power or policy can force us from him? No; we may rejoice in it as a certain truth, let Satan and unbelief say what they will to the contrary, that the Lord's afflicted people on earth are as safe, though not so quiet, as his glorified people in heaven. They are embarked on a troubled sea, the tempests often roar around them, and the waves seem ready to swallow them up; but they have an anchor within the vail, sure and steadfast, which can neither be broken nor removed. They have a pilot, a guardian, whose wisdom and power are infinite, and who, of his own good pleasure, has engaged his truth and honour that he will bring them safe, through all, to the haven of eternal rest. Let us therefore trust, and not be afraid; let us rejoice, and say, "The Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, and he also is become my salvation."

How happy should we be, could we always believe the glorious things which are spoken to us as children, in the word of him who cannot fail of accomplishing his promise. But are we not fools and slow of heart in this matter? at least I am, and hence proceed my many complaints. Alas! what a hard heart have I, that can doubt, and repine, and limit the Lord, after all the great things he has shown me! Wretched heart, that can stand it out still, against oaths, and promises, and blood. Methinks I may sum up all my wants and prayers in one sentence—Lord, give me faith! Oh, if faith was in daily exercise, how little would the world, and the things of time and sense, seem in my eyes! What a dreadful thing would sin appear, that spilt my Saviour's blood! And how would my very heart rejoice at the sound of Jesus' name? If I had faith to pierce within the vail, and see what is going forward in yon blessed world; how earnestly should I long to be dissolved, that I might join in worship there! and how willingly should I spend and be spent for the Gospel's sake! However, though it is not with us as we would wish, we have reason to bless God it is so well with us as it is; that we are not altogether dead in trespasses

and sins, strangers and enemies to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. We have reason to be thankful that we know something of our disease and our physician. He who has taken our case in hand will, in his own time, perfect the cure. An hour is coming on when we shall no more say, I am sick; we shall see him as he is; we shall be like him; we shall weep no more, all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and the days of our mourning shall be ended.

Having, therefore, such promises, let us be animated to run the way of the Lord's commandments with an enlarged heart. Let the joy of the Lord be our strength. Opposition, temptation, affliction, we must expect; these things lie in the path-way to glory; but we may remember him who hath trod the path before us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps. I say, tempted and opposed we may be; but it is not probable that we shall be spit upon, buffetted, and crucified for him, as he was for us.

We shall have but a taste, at the most, of that bitter cup which *he* drank off to the dregs. And he is near us to support us in our distresses, to carry us through, to make us more than conquerors, and then to put the crown of righteousness and victory on our heads with his own hands. Let us, then, go forth without the camp, bearing his reproach; let us not hang down our heads like bulrushes, but rather count it all joy if we are called to the honour of suffering disgrace, or any kind of inconvenience, for his name's sake. Above all, let us pray to have our conversation as becometh the Gospel of Christ; that those who speak evil may be ashamed and put to silence, when they behold our meekness, humility, and christian carriage.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Remember to pray for your unworthy friend.

LETTER VII.

To Miss M****.

March 22, 1763.

My Dear Madam,

I gladly embrace the first opportunity that has offered of writing post-free since I was favoured with your last letter. It gives me great pleasure to hear from you; and, if our correspondence is made mutually profitable and pleasant, I trust we shall join in giving all the praise to him who hath taught us to lisp something of the gracious truths of his Gospel. He is pleased to hide

these things from the wise and prudent, and to reveal them unto babes. We have, indeed, whereof to glory, but not in ourselves; the right hand of the Lord has been exalted in our behalf; the right hand of the Lord has brought mighty things to pass. When we were utterly helpless and hopeless, he saw and pitied us, and bid us live. He did not cut us off in the midst of our sins, (as is the case of thousands,) but waited to be gracious; and when his hour was come, his time of love, he revealed himself as our mighty Saviour, he poured oil and wine into our wounds, he gave us beauty for ashes, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; he opened our blind eyes, he unstopped our deaf ears, dispossessed the legion, and brought us to sit at his feet clothed and in our right minds. What a wonder of mercy is this, considered in itself! but much more if we think of the means by which it was effected; that in order to bring about this blessed change, that mercy and truth might meet together in our salvation, and the righteousness of God harmonize with the sinner's peace, the Lord Jesus, who was rich, humbled himself to become poor; to live an obscure and suffering life, in the form of a servant, and to die a shameful, painful, and accursed death, that we, through his poverty, might be made children and heirs of God; might receive grace to serve him here, and dwell with him in glory for ever. For this end he willingly endured the cross, and despised the shame, he hid not his face from shame and spitting, he gave his back to the smiters, his cheek to them that plucked off the hair, he submitted to wear a crown of thorns, to be nailed by the hands and feet to the accursed tree, to endure the fiercest assaults of Satan, yea, to drink the full cup of the wrath of God when "it pleased the Father to bruise him," and to make "his soul an offering for sin!"

Oh! for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break;
And all harmonious human tongues
Their Saviour's praises speak.

Yes, we will praise thee, dearest Lord,
Our souls are all on flame;
Hosannah round the spacious earth,
To thine adored name!

The apostle well knew the force of his argument to a believing soul, when he said, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God." Surely nothing can be more reasonable, than that we should live to him who thus died for us. Shall we, we who are redeemed from hell at such a price, shall we continue in sin? God forbid! Shall we not rather say, "The love of Christ constraineth us" to devote ourselves, our all, to him alone: to abstain from all appearance of evil; to hate every false way, and to

know, study, desire, and love nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified; that we may feel the power of his resurrection, have fellowship in his sufferings, and be made conformable to his death.

What you observe of the way in which the Lord makes his precious promises food to his children's faith, namely, by inclining their hearts to watchfulness and diligence in all his appointed means; and enabling them to walk unspotted from the vanities and pollutions of the world, waiting for the consolations and teachings of his Holy Spirit, is, I hope, the very sense of my soul. The promises were not given to slacken our endeavours, but to animate us to earnestness. An evangelical dependence on the Lord for righteousness and strength, and an evangelical obedience to his commands, are well suited to each other; they are, indeed, inseparable, and in equal proportion; where one declines, the other cannot flourish. Too many, as you say, are for separating what God has joined together. But let their mistakes humble and warn us, and show us the necessity of keeping close to the Lord. We must not presume; for our hearts are as deceitful as others. Yet we need not be terrified; for the Lord whom we serve is able to keep us from falling, and to preserve us from every evil. We live in dangerous times; the work of the Lord is greatly on the revival in many places, and therefore errors and offences abound; for where the good seed is plentifully sown, the enemy will always find means to sow his tares. But our Lord will keep his own children that wait upon him for strength and direction every day. He will give us to grow in grace, and the knowledge of his truth; and by the words of his lips we shall be kept from the paths of the destroyer.

Let us further comfort ourselves with the prospect of a future time when every evil and infirmity shall cease. You know who hath said, "Surely I come quickly." And do not our hearts echo to his words? Do not the Spirit and the bride agree? Yea, "Amen, Even so come Lord Jesus." Come and put an end to our fears and failings. Come and deliver us from this scene of strife and confusion. We are weary of living in the tents of Mesech. We are weary of ourselves. Oh! we can hardly bear to pass day after day with such faint unworthy apprehensions of thy beauty and thy goodness. We are weary and ashamed of our holy things. So much coldness and wandering in prayer, in reading the word, in thy public ordinances, that we cannot but say—Oh that I had wings like a dove, that I might fly far away from this vain ensnaring world! When will this conflict cease? when shall all our tears be wiped away? when shall we know thee as thou art, and be formed into thy complete resemblance? Well, the time is short, and passing fast away. Hold out, faith and patience, a little longer, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. In the mean time,

may we have grace to improve the present, as the only opportunity we can have of glorifying our Lord and Saviour in a sinful world. When we get safe home, we shall not think we have done and suffered too much by the way.

I am yours.

LETTER VIII.

To Miss M****.

June 11, 1763.

DEAR MADAM,

SINCE my return from Yorkshire, I have had but little leisure to recollect all I have seen, and heard, and been partaker in, for near these two months past. These occasional opportunities are now at an end for a season; and my principal intercourse must be with him who is always near. Oh! for grace to improve this high privilege aright; then I shall have no need to regret the defects or loss of creature-converse.

The Lord has led me to many pleasant streams; but I desire especially to rejoice in liberty to draw nigh to the fountain. Methinks my heart joins with the desire of those who said, "We would see Jesus." When we come to heaven, without doubt we shall find great pleasure in communion with the "general assembly of the church of the first born;" but the very heaven of all will be to behold him who for our sakes was crowned with thorns and nailed to the cross. All the rest would be but poor company if he were absent. And thus proportionably I find it to be on earth. I delight in his people; but they can only profit me so far as I am able to see him in them, and to feel his presence in my own soul. My whole study and desire is comprised in this short sentence—"To walk with God"—to set the Lord always before me; to hear his voice in every creature, in every dispensation, ordinance, and providence; to keep him in view as my portion, sun, and shield; my strength, advocate, and Saviour. And all my complaints may be summed up in this one—a proneness to wander from him. This is too frequently the case with me, I hardly know how or why. Through mercy, I am in a measure delivered from the love of this present evil world; the desire of my heart is towards God? I account his loving-kindness to be better than life, and esteem all his precepts concerning all things to be right, and just, and good. I do not even wish for a dispensation to admit any rival into my heart; he richly deserves it all, and I am willing and desirous to be his alone, and to be wholly conformed to him. Yet still I find the ef-

fects of a depraved nature; and notwithstanding all my struggles against inward and outward evil, I am too often carried away from the point of simple faith and dependence. The lively experience of a Christian is not hard to be described; neither is it hard to say much about it. But to feel what we say, to sit down under the shadow of the tree of life, to abide in Christ; to feed on him in my heart by faith with thanksgiving, this I find a rare attainment, easily lost, and not so soon regained. I know enough of it to make me desirous of more, and yet so little, that I have frequent cause to cry out, My leanness, my leanness! and to lie low in the dust before God. A remaining root of pride and self-righteousness often springs up and interrupts my peace. Indeed, as to the ground of my hopes and acceptance, I am mercifully kept from doubts and fears; I trust in him who has wrought out a perfect righteousness for my justification, and has stretched out an everlasting arm for my salvation. I see the honour of the divine attributes effectually secured, and that God is not only merciful and good, but faithful and just, in saving an unworthy believing sinner. But what I want, is not only to expect a heaven hereafter, but to experience a heaven begun below, to live up to the privileges of the Gospel, to have enlarged desires after holiness, and those desires abundantly answered. I want more of the influences of the Holy Spirit, under his various characters, as the teacher, quickener, comforter, and sealer of the people of God. I want to know more clearly what the apostle desired for his friends in those two comprehensive prayers, Eph. i. 17—20, and iii. 16—19. How little do I understand of that height and depth, and breadth and length, he there speaks of! How faint are my ideas of the glorious hope of his calling, and the exceeding greatness of his mighty power! Well, blessed be God for the little I have! I trust it is an earnest of more; he has given me to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and he has said, I shall be filled. I remember the time when I was easy enough about these things; the language of my heart was, "Depart from me." Yea, I resisted his Spirit, despised his mercy, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. But oh! he "was found of me that sought him not." He passed by me, and bid me live; he saved me in spite of myself; he would not give me up; he appeared in the hour of my distress, snatched the prey from the hand of the mighty, and delivered the lawful captive. And ever since, how good has he been to me! how gently has he led me! how often has he restored me when wandering, revived me when fainting, healed my breaches, supplied my wants, heard my prayers, and set up a seasonable standard against my enemies, when they have been coming in upon me like a flood! And even now he is with me, he is never weary of doing me good, and I believe he will be with me, even to the end, till at length he brings

me home to his kingdom to be near him for ever. Hence, indeed, arises a great part of my grief, to think that I should be so cold, and barren, and unprofitable, under such amazing displays of undeserved love. O Lord, touch the rock, and cause the waters to flow; soften and inflame my heart, that I may at length become thy disciple indeed.

I trust you will continue to prize the means of grace, and to watch against every appearance of evil. Take heed lest either of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Beware of that worst of evils, spiritual pride. Pray earnestly for a deep sense of your own insufficiency. I did not thoroughly approve the question that was proposed concerning a power in ourselves, though I believe you understand it in a good sense; but let us beware of trusting in any other power than the power of Christ received continually by faith. I know carnal minds will abuse this principle, and so they will every other doctrine of the Gospel; but let it suffice us that he who knows us best has said, "Without me ye can do nothing."

I am your affectionate and obliged servant.

LETTER IX.

To Miss M****.

January 3, 1764.

DEAR MADAM,

IT is a time of trial among your friends here; nor have I wholly escaped. Mrs. N**** has kept her chamber more than ten weeks; and we see no present prospect of her recovery. Her complaint is a nervous fever, attended with a complaint in her head and stomach, which medicines seem insufficient to remove. Through mercy, her illness has not often risen to a very high degree: but continuing so long, it has rendered her very weak and feeble, so that sometimes she can hardly bear any one to walk across the room.

I sympathize for my friends, and I feel for myself. But, blessed be God, I do not mourn as those who have no hope. I know it is not an enemy hath done this. It is the Lord, who hath saved me out of all afflictions, he who gave me all my good things, he to whom I have surrendered myself and my all; he it is that hath laid this trial on me for my good. I believe it to be necessary, because he is pleased to appoint it; and though at present it is not joyous but grievous, I trust that in the end he will cause it to yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. I desire to submit

to his will in all things; and though I feel the depravity of my nature too often, yet, upon the whole, he enables me to trust to him, and leave all in his hands. I pray that her health may be restored when he sees best, but especially that her sickness may be sanctified to both our souls. In this we hope and desire the concurrence of your prayers.

At such times as these, the unspeakable blessing of having a hope in God according to the Gospel, appears with double evidence. Faith in Jesus prepares us for every event. Though he put forth his hand, and seem to threaten our dearest comforts, yet when we remember that it is *his* hand, when we consider that it is *his* design, *his* love, *his* wisdom, and *his* power, we cannot refuse to trust him. The reluctance we feel is against our judgment; for we are sure that what he chooses for us must be best. Then, again, to think how much less our sufferings are than our sins have deserved; how many mercies we still enjoy on every hand, how much heavier burdens are the portion of many around us; to compare the present momentary affliction with the exceeding weight of glory which shall be revealed; to recollect that the time is short, the hour is swiftly approaching when the Lord shall wipe away all tears, and constrain us with wonder and joy to sing, "He hath done all things well." Such considerations as these, together with the remembrance of what he suffered for us, are always at hand to compose our souls under troubles, and will be effectual according to the degree of faith. Our faith also is strengthened by affliction; we learn more of our own insufficiency, and the vanity of all things about us; and we discover more of the power, faithfulness, and nearness of a prayer-hearing God. Upon this ground Habakkuk could sit down and rejoice under the loss of all. He could look at the blasted fig-tree and the withered vine, see the herds and flocks cut off; and every creature-comfort fail; yet says he, "I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation." O the name of Jesus, when we can speak of him as ours; this is the balm for every wound, cordial for every care; it is as ointment poured forth diffusing a fragrancy through the whole soul, and driving away the hurtful fumes and fogs of distrust and discontent.

I am affectionately yours.

LETTER X.

To Miss M****.

DEAR MADAM,

I AM afraid before this you have charged me with neglect and unkindness. I confess I have delayed too long, but can truly say, my affection for you and all my dear friends at Y————, remains unaltered and unabated. Let my various removals, and the necessary new engagements they have brought upon me, plead my excuse, especially as I have not been often faulty in this way; I hope I shall not in future give you so just reason of complaint.

The Lord has at length brought me into the ministry according to my desire, and beyond my hopes placed me in a fruitful part of his vineyard, where his Gospel is known, loved, professed, and possessed by many. I have a large congregation, and a comfortable prospect of usefulness. This, I doubt not, will rejoice you and stir you up to praise him on my behalf, and to pray for me, that I may devote my all to his service, and in a deep sense of my own insufficiency, depend continually upon him for wisdom, strength, and grace, to help in time of need. I can justly ask this of you, as I am sure you have a constant place in my heart, and a frequent remembrance in my prayers.

I long to know how you go on: I hope comfortably. I hope you still find that the joy of the Lord is your strength, that his service is perfect freedom; that it is good to wait upon him, and that you daily enjoy his presence both in public and in private. Are you not often filled with admiration and love at the thought of his distinguishing grace in calling you out of darkness into light? And when you are enabled, by faith, to view Jesus as dying for sin, and now pleading for sinners before the throne, are not your hearts melted into godly sorrow, and inflamed with a holy zeal to hate every false way, and to cleave to him with full purpose of heart? These are sure signs that you are walking in the good old way, that you are interested in the blessings of the everlasting covenant, and you may be confidently assured, that he who has begun the good work in you will perform the same unto the day of Christ Jesus.

Many are the trials and exercises we must expect to meet with in our progress; but this one consideration outweighs them all, The Lord is on our side; and if he be for us, none can be against us to harm us. In all these things we shall be more than conquerors, through him that has loved us. Afflictions, though not in themselves joyous, but grievous, yet, when sanctified, are

among our choice mercies; in due time they shall yield the peaceful fruits of righteousness; and even at present, they shall surely be attended with seasonable and sufficient supports. One great desire of the believer, is to understand the good word of God more and more; and one principal means by which we advance in this knowledge is the improvement we are enabled to make of our daily trials. The promises are generally made to an afflicted state; and we could not taste their sweetness, nor experience their truth, if we were not sometimes brought into the circumstances to which they relate. It is said, "I will be with them in trouble;" but how could we know what a mercy is contained in these words, unless trouble was sometimes our lot? It is said to be the believers privilege to glory in tribulation. But we never could know that this is possible without we had tribulation to glory in. However, this is matter of joy and glory indeed, to find peace and comfort within, when things are disagreeable and troublesome without. Then we are enabled to set to our seal that God is true; then we learn how happy it is to have a refuge that cannot be taken from us; a support that is able to bear all the weight we can lay upon it; a spring of joy that cannot be stopped up by any outward events. A great part of the little we know of our God, his faithfulness, his compassion, his readiness to hear and to answer our prayers; his wisdom in delivering and providing, when all our contrivances fail; and his goodness in overruling every thing to our souls' good; I say, much of what we know of these things we learnt in our trials, and have therefore reason to say, It was good for us to be afflicted. And as the Lord has brought us safe through thus far, we have good ground to trust him to the end. We know not what is before us. Perhaps we may meet greater difficulties by and by, than we have ever yet seen; but if we keep in mind who delivered us from the lion and the bear, we may face the Philistine also without terror. God will be with us, and strengthen us with strength in our souls. Only it is our wisdom to keep close to him, that when the evil day comes, we may have confidence before him in all our troubles. When afflictions overtake us in a careless frame, and find guilt upon the conscience, then they are doubly troublesome.

I am yours, &c.

LETTER XI.

To Miss M****.

July 20, 1768.

My Dear Sisters,

We agreed to exchange a letter once in three months, but we both began in the same week: I have been waiting ever since for yours; and perhaps our letters may meet upon the road again. If so, we shall be still puzzled; but if you have not yet written, let me have an answer to this within one month, and then you may expect one from me about a quarter of a year afterwards. Indeed, some things I have lately engaged in will oblige me to drop a great part of my correspondence; but I cannot prevail with myself to give up yours, because, both present and absent, the Lord has helped and comforted me by you; and so long as I can remember some precious seasons I have enjoyed at Y———, so long will you have a peculiar place in my heart. However, you must not expect two for one.

I wish you could make it suit one, two, or all of you (the more the better) to come and see us at Olney. So I told you when I saw you; so I tell you again. I think you would like to spend a little time with us. Through mercy, we continue to go on very comfortably; our society has been enlarged by several additions: and all, in general, are in a thriving way. Soon after I returned from Yorkshire, I began to expound the Pilgrim's Progress in our meetings on Tuesday evenings; and though we have been almost seven months travelling with the pilgrim, we have not yet left the house Beautiful; but I believe shall set off for the Valley of Humiliation in about three weeks. I find this book so full of matter, that I can seldom go through more than a page or a half a page at a time. I hope the attempt has been greatly blessed amongst us; and for myself, it has perhaps given me a deeper insight into John Bunyan's knowledge, judgment, and experience in the Christian life, than I should ever have had without it.

The Lord is pleased to supply me still in public service, and to continue my acceptance, with his people. But with regard to what passes between him and my own soul, there is for the most part a very awful distance. I mourn under such a deadness and barrenness in secret duties, as I believe very few, who are in any measure alive, are exercised with. It puts me often to a stand, and affords the enemy a handle to present the most distressing doubts and fears as to my own state. I dare not plead, in answer to his suggestions, that I must be right, because the Lord is pleased to

assist and own me in the work of the ministry; because the apostle plainly supposes, a man may speak like an angel to others: and be but sounding brass himself; may speak to good effect to them, and be himself a cast-away. But though I dare not rest upon this plea, the Lord affords me a better; and has been pleased to give such a view of the all-sufficient righteousness of Jesus, and the certainty of the promises in Him, that these doubts seldom pierce more than skin-deep, and, at the bottom of my dry complaining frames, he is pleased to maintain a stable peace. I trust I am safe; but I am sure I am not comfortable. I have every thing to make me so that this world can afford; but I hope the whole of this world would not satisfy me without the light of his countenance, and a more cheerful ability to love, serve, and praise. For this I sigh, for this I pine. After all, he knows what is best for me to humble the pride of my heart, and to maintain in me a spirit of dependence and self-abasement. Perhaps he sees I am not fit to be trusted with comforts, especially when my outward path is in all respects so very smooth. I hope his grace is, in a measure, with me; otherwise I should grow quite careless, or the evils I feel in my heart would break out to the observation of others; neither of which I hope, is at present the case. To Him, and not to me, be the praise; for if he did not hold me up continually. I am sure I should soon wofully fall.

I rejoiced to hear it was well with you; yes, it is well; you have a good Shepherd who is able to keep you from falling, and to supply all your wants, to shield you from all dangers, to feed you with heavenly manna and living water; and ere long you shall see his face without a veil, and shine like the sun in his kingdom for ever. May I not address you with the angel's salutation?—Hail ye who are highly favoured; the Lord is with you; blessed are ye among women. I need not tell you, that it becomes you to be deeply humbled; you know it and desire it. It becomes you likewise to be highly thankful. Complain not of crosses by the way; who was ever spiritually-minded without them? These are among the evidences that you are children; and the Lord will make a rich amends for all. Then we shall weep, we shall sin no more.

Your truly affectionate brother and servant.

LETTER XII.

To Miss M****.

March 1, 1769.

DEAR MADAM,

I NOW write a little before the time appointed, lest some hinderance should again make you think me forgetful.

I was glad to find you were all living, as I had some apprehensions concerning Miss K****, and especially glad to find that you were all alive in the very best sense, even to God. We have need enough to mourn over our unfruitfulness; but let us remember that it is a special mercy of God, to be enabled to hold fast our profession. For we live in perilous times, when there are such dreadful falls of professors as might well shake and terrify us, if we were not, indeed, founded upon a rock. But the Lord knows them that are his, and he will keep them; yea, he teaches them to improve the miscarriages of others, as motives to stir them up to greater watchfulness, and to show them the necessity of crying daily to him, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." I suppose you have heard the unhappy case of *****, a man whom I loved as a friend, and honoured as an eminent believer: how often have his letters made me ashamed! his dreadful fall has affected me more than any thing of the kind I have ever met with since the Lord gave me acquaintance with his people. O, how great is the deceitfulness of the heart of sin, and Satan! How should the apostle's words be laid to heart, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall!" 1 Cor. x. 12. However, as I said, those who feel their weakness, whose dependence upon Jesus is Scriptural, such a dependence as makes them diligent in the use of appointed means, and desirous of being kept from the appearance of evil; these shall be preserved. That is a gracious and supporting promise, (to those who feel they can do nothing for themselves, are jealous over their own hearts, and see the snares that are continually spread for their feet,) which the Lord makes to all his faithful people, Rev. iii. 10. Alas! unless he vouchsafe to keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. But faith in his name and promise, gives us confidence and encouragement to aim at that watchfulness on our parts, to which his word exhorts us. The Lord does not keep his people by teaching them so to rest in the promises of his care, as to sit down secure and careless in themselves. But he preserves them from falling from him, by putting his fear in their hearts, by making them sensible of their dangers, and drawing them to come

boldly to his throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need. And when his Spirit bears witness with our spirits, that we are thus looking to him in the way of duty, weak and unworthy as we are, we may triumph in his salvation, and be firmly persuaded, that neither the world nor Satan shall be able to separate us from his love. Great is the consolation provided for humble souls in what the Scripture declares concerning the power, grace, offices, faithfulness, and compassion of the Redeemer. These things are always equally true in themselves, but not always equally evident to us; for we cannot comfortably apply them, but in proportion as his Spirit is with us. It is therefore wisely and mercifully appointed, that if we grow slack and careless, our comforts and peace should decline, that we may perceive in time that we are getting out of the right path, and cry to the Lord to restore us again. While those who are always alike, who can talk of assurance and perseverance while they are evidently indulging a trifling and careless spirit, and expect the promises will be accomplished in another way than that path of diligence, humiliation, and prayer, which the Lord himself has marked out; these persons, I say, always give cause to fear that they know very little of what they are talking about.

My paper is almost full, and all that I have written is quite beside my first intention. But it may not be the worse for that! I love to give up my heart and pen, without study, when I am writing. The Lord knows the state of my friends, their present temptations, &c. and I look to him to give me a word in season. Things with us are as usual. The great Shepherd is still pleased to guard our fold, so that the enemy has not yet been suffered to distract us with errors and divisions, nor has one turned back after having fully joined us. Our number increases every year, though not very fast. As to myself I am much exercised with a deadness of spirit in secret, which makes me often groan. But, through grace, I can say, that as I never saw more of my own vileness, so, I think, I never saw Jesus more precious and desirable, was more clearly sensible of the vanity of every thing without him, than I have of late. "*None* but Jesus," is my motto. All wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and happiness, which does not spring from and centre in Him, my soul desires to renounce.

May the Lord bless each of you with an abiding sense of his precious love, that your hearts may burn, and your lives shine.

So prays yours, &c.

LETTER XIII.

To Miss M****.

DEAR MADAM,

I DULY received your letter of the 15th of December, and am very willing still to include Mrs. H**** in our correspondence. I hope she finds, in every change of life, that Jesus is still the same, gracious and precious to her soul; and my prayer is, that neither the comforts nor cares of a married state may damp the frame of her spirit towards him. The heart is deceitful, the world ensnaring, the enemy subtle and powerful; but we know who has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." He is able to keep us, not only safe as to the end, but also lively, faithful, and dependent by the way, in every circumstance and station to which his providence calls us.

I observe your last is written in a more complaining style than usual. Causes of complaint are, indeed, innumerable; but remember "the joy of the Lord is your strength." Be not surprised that you still find the effects of indwelling sin—it must and will be so. The frame of our fallen nature is depraved throughout, and, like the leprous house, it must be entirely demolished, and raised anew. While we are in this world, we shall groan, being burdened. I wish you to long and breathe after greater measures of sanctification; but we are sometimes betrayed into a legal spirit, which will make us labour in the very fire to little purpose. If we find deadness and dryness stealing upon us, our only relief is to look to Jesus—to his blood for pardon—to his grace for strength; we can work nothing out of ourselves. To pore over our own evils will not cure them; but he who was typified by the brazen serpent is ever present, lifted up to our view in the camp; and one believing sight of him will do more to restore peace to the conscience, and life to our graces, than all our own lamentations and resolutions.

Further, we must expect changes. Were we always alike, we should dream that we had some power or goodness inherent in ourselves; he will therefore sometimes withdraw, that we may learn our absolute dependence on him. When this is the case, it is our part humbly to continue seeking him in his own appointed means, and patiently to wait his promised return. It is a point of great wisdom to know our Gospel liberty, and yet not to abuse it; to see that our hope stands sure and invariable, distant from all the changes we feel in our experience, that we are accepted, not because we are comfortable or lively, but because Jesus has loved

us, and given himself for us; and yet, at the same time, to be longing and thirsting for the light of his countenance, and a renewed sense of his love upon our hearts. Two things we should always guard and pray against; that the knowledge of our acceptance may not make us secure and careless, and likewise, that our endeavours after conformity to his revealed will, may not subject us to a spirit of bondage. The apostle, who well knew the nature of our warfare, exhorts us to "rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS." He knew what conflicts we should meet with from afflictions, imperfections, temptations, and desertions: yet he says, *always;* which can only be practised by those who see and keep in mind that they are complete in Christ; that he is all in all to them; their righteousness, wisdom, and strength; their sun and shield; their friend and representative before the throne; their shepherd and their husband. If I may speak my own experience, I find that to keep my eyes simply upon Christ, as my *peace*, and my *life*, is by far the hardest part of my calling. Through mercy, he enables me to avoid what is wrong in the sight of men, but it seems easier to deny self in a thousand instances of outward conduct, than in its ceaseless endeavours to act as a principle of righteousness and power.

John Bunyan, in his advanced years, took notice of the abominations that had still too much place in his heart; one of them was, he says, a secret cleaving to the covenant of works. I am sure this is no small abomination in a believer; but, alas! it cleaves as close to me as my skin, and costs me many a sigh.

I am yours, &c.

LETTER XIV.

To Mrs. H****.

September 21, 1770.

MADAM,

As the engagements you lately have entered into have not separated you from each other, I can, as formerly, write to you both at once. I should be glad to hear that the third in our correspondence was as comfortably settled in H—— likewise. However, I beg you will mention my love to her when opportunity offers, and tell her, that I hope to be always mindful of her. Your being both removed from Y——— must doubtless be a great trial to her; but I trust she will find an all-sufficient God always near, to make good every change and every loss.

I congratulate Mrs. C**** on her marriage, and Mrs. H**** on the Lord's goodness in preserving her life, and giving her a living child; for the rest I may speak to you without distinction. The grace of God enabled you both to walk honourably in single life: I trust the same grace will enable you to adorn your profession in the married state. I need not tell you that both the sphere of your comforts and your trials is now enlarged. Your opportunities for usefulness will be increased; so, likewise, will the snares and temptations in the path of duty. I take it for granted that you are very happy, that you are united to your husbands, not only by marriage, but by mutual affection, and what is better still, by mutual faith; and that, as you sought the Lord's direction before the connexion was formed, so you came together evidently by his blessing. What then shall I say to you? Only, or chiefly this—Beware of being too happy—beware of idolatry. Husbands, children, possessions, every thing by which the Lord is pleased to afford us content or pleasure, are full of snares. How hard is it to love a creature just as we ought; and so to possess our temporal blessings as neither to overvalue nor undervalue them! How rare is it to see a believer go on steadily, and in a lively, thriving spirit, if remarkably favoured with prosperous circumstances! It is hard, but it is not impossible: impossible, indeed, it is to us; but it is easy to Him who has said, "My grace is sufficient for you." My desire is, that you may both be witnesses of the Lord's faithfulness to this his good promise. I wish you health, peace, and prosperity; but, above all, that your souls may prosper; that you may still prefer the light of God's countenance to your chief joy; that you may still delight yourselves in the Lord; be daily hungering and thirsting after him, and daily receiving from his fulness, even grace for grace; that you may rejoice in his all-sufficiency, may taste his love in every dispensation; that every blessing of his common providence may come to you as a fruit and token of his covenant love; that the frame of your spirits may be heavenward, your conduct exemplary, and your whole conversation may breathe the meekness, simplicity and spirituality which become the gospel of Christ. I have strong confidence in the Lord for you, my dear friends, that it shall be even thus: and it will rejoice my heart to hear that it is so.

However the Lord may be pleased to indulge us with comforts and mercies here, still this is not, cannot be, our rest. Indwelling sin, the temptations of Satan, changing dispensations, and the vanity which is inseparably entwined with every earthly connexion, will more or less disturb our peace. But there is a brighter world, where sin and sorrow can never enter; every moment brings us nearer to it:—then every imperfection shall cease, and our best desires shall be satisfied beyond our present conceptions:

—then we shall see him whom having not seen we love; we shall see him in all his glory, not as now, through the medium of ordinances, but face to face, without a veil, we shall see him so as to be completely transformed into his perfect image. Then, likewise, we shall see all his redeemed, and join with an innumerable multitude of all nations, people, and languages, in singing the triumphant song of Moses and the Lamb, for ever! Then we shall look back with wonder on all the way the Lord led us through this wilderness, and shall say, "He hath done all things well." May this blessed hope comfort our hearts, strengthen our hands, and make us account nothing dear or hard, so that we may finish our course with joy. Pray for us; and believe me to be

Your affectionate friend and servant.

LETTER XV.

To Mrs. C****.

May 2, 1771.

My Dear Madam,

I spent about five weeks at London lately, which has occasioned me to delay answering your letter something longer than usual. But I have not forgotten you. The change of your situation will probably change the methods of Satan in his unwearied attempts to disturb the peace of those who love the Lord; for he knows how to suit himself to our circumstances, whatever they be.

It may likewise draw forth the weakness of indwelling sin, in ways different from your former experience, and give you new views of the evil and deceitfulness of the heart. But, as I trust you had an eye to the word, Spirit, and providence of God, when you entered into the marriage relation, and sought his blessing by repeated prayer, you need not fear but his grace will be sufficient for you. The more the Lord blesses you in outward things, the more sensible you will be (if your heart is kept alive) that true happiness is only to be found in himself; for sin and vanity are closely connected with every thing beneath the skies. In this view I trust he will enable you to number your crosses among your mercies, as necessary to keep your soul from cleaving to the dust, and to quicken your prayers and desires heaven-wards. Our necessary connexions in this life, especially those which are most pleasing, are attended with many snares. May the Lord keep you sensible of the danger, that you may be continually crying, "Hold thou us up, and then we shall be safe;" and be watchful against the first appearances of decline in the power of the life of

faith. I am, however, fully persuaded that a due attention to the concerns of our relative duties and callings in this world, can never be properly hinderances to us in walking with God. These things may require some of our thoughts, and much of our time; but if we can manage them in obedience to his will, and with a reference to his glory, they are then sanctified, and become religious actions. And I doubt not but a believer, acting in a right spirit, may be said to worship God in the shop or kitchen, no less than when waiting on him in his ordinances. But he must teach us to do this, for we have no sufficiency of ourselves; yea, he must teach us and strengthen us continually, for we cannot live by past experience, without a new supply of grace from hour to hour: and this he has promised. See Isa. xxvii. 3. It is not the action, (if lawful,) but the spirit with which it is performed, that the Lord regards. We are naturally desirous to do some great thing; but all the law is fulfilled, evangelically, by love. And a person called by providence to sweep the streets, if he does it to the Lord, performs as acceptable a service as another who should preach the Gospel to thousands. As to cares and anxieties, which are unnecessary, and therefore sinful, you will not be wholly without them while there is any unbelief and sin remaining in the heart. Your great mercy will be to be humbled for them, and to take occasion from all that you feel amiss, to adore the free grace of God, to rejoice in the perfect work, boundless compassion, and prevailing intercession of Jesus. He knows our frame, and remembers that we are but dust. And though many evils arise in our hearts, which are new to us, they are not new to him. He knew what we were, and what we should be, before he called us; and yet it pleased him to make us his people.

I am sorry to hear that you have uneasinesses and differences in your church; for, through mercy, I wish well to all the Lord's assemblies, without respect to names and parties. I shall be glad to hear that the Healer of breaches is pleased to settle you comfortably again. In the mean time, I trust you will account it a privilege that you live in a place where the preaching of the Gospel is not confined to one denomination. I bless God, we are still favoured with peace here. May we prize it: it is that to the soul, or to a church, which health is to the body. There may be life, but there can be no comfort without it. While Satan can prevail to break a people's peace, there is usually a full stop put to edification. There may be preaching, and hearing, and praying; but every thing will be weak and languid. For the Holy Spirit, whose emblem is the peaceful dove, will not dwell in the midst of strife and contention. Nay, it is an awful token that he is withdrawn already, when these evils are greatly prevalent. When ordinances are powerful, and both ministers and people taste that the

Lord is gracious, things may arise, through human infirmity and Satan's subtlety, to threaten the continuance of peace; but then it will be as at the breaking out of a fire, where every one exerts himself to extinguish it before it can get to a head. We have many combustibles, and the enemy will throw sparks upon them to set all in a flame; but happy they who so value peace as to be willing to give up any thing but truth to preserve it. We join in love to you both. Pray for us.

I am affectionately yours.

LETTER XVI.

To Mrs. C****.

February 14, 1772.

DEAR MADAM,

I FIND, by the date of your last, that I have not been so punctual to the time of answering as formerly. Indeed, business of one kind or another so grows on my hands, that I am in arrears to many.

I hope the Lord, who has mercifully given you children, will enable you to bring them up in his fear, and accompany your endeavours with his blessing; and make them in due time partakers of his grace, that they may know and love the Lord God of their parents.

Your warfare, it seems, still continues; and it will continue while you remain here. But he is faithful who has promised to make us more than conquerors in the last conflict—then we shall hear the voice of war no more for ever. Whatever we suffer by the way, the end will make amends for all. The repeated experience we have of the deceitfulness of our own hearts, is a means which the Lord employs to make us willing debtors to his free grace, and to teach us to live more entirely upon Jesus. He is our peace, our strength, our righteousness, our all in all. And we learn, from day to day, that though diligence and watchfulness in the use of appointed means is our part, yet we are preserved in life; not by our care, but his. We have a watchful Shepherd, who neither slumbers nor sleeps; his eyes are always upon his people, his arm underneath them; this is the reason that their enemies cannot prevail against them. We are conscious to ourselves of many unguarded moments, in which we might be surprised and ruined, if we were left without his almighty defence. Yea, we often suffer loss by our folly; but he restores us when wandering; revives us when fainting; heals us when wounded; and having obtained

help of him, we continue to this hour; and he will be our guard and guide even unto death. He has delivered, he does deliver; and in him we trust that he will yet deliver us.

We have had but few alterations at ———, since my last; only that of late the Lord has been pleased to give his word a more convincing power than for some time before. We have had several awakened within these few months, who appear to he truly in earnest. Upon the whole, though we have many causes of humiliation, I hope it is with us in some measure according to that pleasing description, Acts, ix. 31. Help us to praise the Lord for his goodness to us.

As to myself, there is little variation in my path. The law of sin in my members distresses me; But the Gospel yields relief. It is given me to rest in the finished salvation, and to rejoice in Christ Jesus as my all in all. My soul is athirst for nearer and fuller communion with him. Yet he is pleased to keep me short of those sweet consolations in my retired hours which I could desire. However, I cannot doubt but he is with me, and is pleased to keep up in my heart some sense of the evil of sin, the beauty of holiness, my own weakness, and his glorious all-sufficiency. His I am, and him I desire to serve. I am, indeed, a poor servant; but he is a gracious Master. O! who is a God like unto Him, that forgiveth iniquity, and casteth the sins of his people into the depths of the sea. I shall not always live thus—the land to which we are going is far different to this wilderness through which he is now leading us. Then we shall see his face, and never, never sin.

If either of you or yours should come towards London, we shall be glad to see you; but, if not here we hope to meet in glory. There is but little probability of my seeing you in Yorkshire. We may meet, however at present, I hope we do, at a throne of grace. I intreat a frequent remembrance in your prayers, both of me and mine. This is the best proof we can give of our love to our friends, to bear them upon our hearts before the Lord. Afford me this, and I will pay you in kind, as the Lord shall enable me.

Yours in the best friendship.

LETTER XVII.

To Mrs. C****.

June 5, 1776.

My Dear Friends,

I might appologize for my long silence, but you set me the example; so let us exchange forgiveness. You are busy; and I can assure you I have but little leisure. However, I can say, with you, that my regard remains. I still remember, with pleasure, past times, in which we have taken sweet counsel together; and I look forward to the happy period of all interruptions, when I trust we shall meet to spend an everlasting Sabbath in praise to Him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood.

Mrs. N***** and I are still, by the Lord's mercy, spared to each other. She joins me in love to you both, and to your husbands. We are not only spared, but highly favoured with health, peace, and an abundance of temporal mercies. I am still supported, and in some measure owned, in the pleasing service of preaching the glorious Gospel to my fellow-sinners; and I am still happy in an affectionate, united people. Many have been removed to a better world, but others have been added to us; so that I believe our numbers have been rather increased than diminished, from year to year. But most of our old experienced believers have finished their course, and entered into their rest. Some such we had, who were highly exemplary and useful ornaments to their profession, and very helpful to the young of the flock. We miss them; but the Lord, who has the fulness of the Spirit, is, I hope, bringing others forward to supply their places. We have to sing of abounding grace, and at the same time to mourn over the aboundings of sin; for too many in this neighbourhood have resisted convictions so long, that I am afraid the Lord has given them up to hardness of heart; they are either obstinately determined to hear no more, or to sit quietly under the preaching, and seem to be sermon-proof. Yet I hope and pray for a day of power in favour of some who have hitherto heard in vain. Blessed be God, we are not without some seasons of refreshment, when a sense of his gracious presence makes the ordinances sweet and precious. Many miracles he has wrought among us the twelve years I have been here. The blind see, the deaf hear, the lepers are cleansed, and the dead are raised to spiritual life. Pray for us, that his arm may be revealed in the midst of us.

As to myself, I have had much experience of the deceitfulness of my heart, much warfare on account of the remaining principle

of indwelling sin. Without this experience I should not have known so much of the wisdom, power, grace, and compassion of Jesus. I have good reason to commend him to others, as a faithful Shepherd, an infallible Physician, an unchangeable Friend. I have found him such. Had he not been with me, and were he not mighty to forgive and deliver, I had long ago been trodden down like mire in the streets. He has wonderfully preserved me in my outward walk, so that they who have watched for my halting have been disappointed. But He alone knows the innumerable backslidings, and the great perverseness of my heart. It is of his grace and mercy that I am what I am; having obtained help of him, I continue to this day. And He enables me to believe that he will keep me to the end, and that then I shall be with him for ever.

I hope your souls prosper, and that all the comforts, employments, cares, and trials of life, are sanctified by his blessing, to lead you to a more immediate dependence upon himself; that he enables you to glorify him in your families and connexions, and conforms you to his image, in love, spirituality, meekness, and resignation. Many things must be attended to in their places; but O the blessing of being taught to do and to bear all things for his sake! The life of faith is, to be continually waiting on him, receiving from him, rendering to him, resting in him, and acting for him. In every other view the present state is vanity and vexation of spirit. But when the love of Jesus is the leading and constraining motive of our conduct, the necessary business of every day, in the house, the shop, or the field, is enobled, and makes a part of our religious worship; while every dispensation of Providence, whether pleasant or painful to the flesh, is received and rested in as an intimation of his will, and an evidence of his love and care for us. Happy they who do not stop short in names, forms, and notions, but are desirous of knowing what effects such a gospel as we profess is capable of producing in the spirit and conduct of those to whom it comes, not in word only, but in the demonstration and power of the Holy Ghost.

I commend you and yours to the Lord. I shall always be glad to hear from you; and remain your affectionate friend and servant.

LETTER XVIII.

To Mrs. C****.

June 12, 1779.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOUR last letter was long in coming; but I have deprived myself of all right of complaining by the slowness of my answer. You plead want of time; allow me to plead the same. During the first years of our correspondence you had no family, and I had few engagements, compared to what I have had since. As we grow older, connexions and business, multiply, while alas! for my part, my ability to attend to the many things which call upon me seems rather to decline. My regard for you still subsists, and I use you no worse than I am constrained to use many others whom I have long and dearly loved, and who have equal reason to say I am become a poor correspondent.

For three years past Mrs. N***** has experienced much ill health; and this alone has abridged me of many of those hours which I used to employ in writing to my friends. Of late she has been better, upon the whole, but seldom comfortably well for many weeks together. But in the course of these trials we have had much experience of the Lord's goodness and compassion; and I have found him, and still find him, a God hearing prayer, a very present help in time of trouble. She joins with me in love to you both, to Mrs. H****, and my other friend at Y————, whose name used to stand with yours, and of whom I have heard nothing for a long time.

The life of leisure you once had is now changed for the care of a family. It is an honourable and important charge. I hope the Lord continues to bless you in it; and that you have comfort in seeing your children grow up like olive plants about your table. May he give you wisdom and success in your attempts to bring them up for the Lord; that in due time you, and the children he has given you, may appear together at his right hand.

As to myself, though I have now entered the sixteenth year of my ministry here, and have almost finished the fifty-fourth of my life, my health and strength through his blessing, continue firm; and through his mercy I feel myself no more weary in his service, or weary of it, than at first. I have comfort in the flock he has committed to my care: I have seen many of them depart in peace, and I rejoice to think they are safely housed out of the reach of storms. He has, from time to time, raised up others to supply their places, and, in general, they walk agreeably to

the Gospel, in peace among themselves, and united in affection to me. I speak of the serious people chiefly. Multitudes in the town are mere hearers; and some will not hear at all. But all behave civil, and give me no other trouble than that which I ought to feel most sensibly, a concern for their precious souls, that when the light of the Gospel shines around them, there should be so many who prefer darkness to light, because their deeds are evil.

Every year, and indeed every day, affords me new proofs of the evil and deceitfulness of my heart, and of my utter insufficiency to think even a good thought of myself. But I trust, in the course of various exercises, I have been taught more of the power, grace, and all sufficiency of Jesus. I can commend him to others, not from hearsay, but from my own experience. His name is precious; his love is wonderful; his compassions are boundless; I trust I am enabled to choose him as my all, my Lord, my strength, my Saviour, my portion. I long for more grace to love him better; for, alas! I have reason to number myself among the least of saints and the chief of sinners.

I am yours.

TWENTY-ONE LETTERS

TO

MR. AND MRS. W****.

LETTER I.

To Mr. W****.

Jan. 25, 1766.

DEAR SIR,

YOU (and consequently Mrs. W****, for you cannot suffer alone) have lately been in the furnace, and are now brought safely out. I hope you have much to say of the grace, care, and skill of the great Refiner, who watched over you; and that you have lost nothing but dross. Let this experience be treasured up in your hearts for the use of future times. Other trials will come: but you have found the Lord faithful to his promise, and have good encouragement to trust him again. I would take the liberty to address myself particularly to dear Mrs. ****, upon a theme my heart is well acquainted with. You know your weak side; endeavour to set a double guard of prayer there. Our earthly comforts would be doubly sweet, if we could but venture them without anxiety in the Lord's hands. And where can we lodge them so safely? Is not the first gift, the continuance, the blessing which makes them pleasing, all from him? Was not his design in all this that we should be happy in them? How then can we fear that he will threaten them, much less take them away, but with a view to our further benefit? Let us suppose the thing we are most afraid of actually to happen. Can it come a moment sooner, or in any other way than by his appointment? Is he not gracious and faithful to support us under the stroke? Is he not rich enough to give us something better than ever he will take away? Is not the light of his countenance better than life and all its most valued enjoyments? Is not this our time of trial, and are we not travelling towards a land of light?—Methinks when we view things in the light of eternity, it is much the same whether the separating stroke arrives at the end of seven or seventy years; since, come when it will, it must and will be felt; but one draught of the river of pleasure at God's right hand will make us

forget our sorrows for ever; or the remembrance, if any, will only serve to heighten our joys. Further, what life did he lead whom we call our Master and our Lord? Was not he a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Has he marked out *one* way to heaven with his painful footsteps, and shall we expect, or even wish to walk in *another?* With such considerations as these, we should endeavour to *arm* our minds, and pray to the Lord to fix a sense of them in our hearts, and to renew it from time to time; that when changes are either feared or felt, we may not be like the people of the world, who have no hope, no refuge no throne of grace, but may be enabled to glorify our God in the fire, and give proofs that his grace is sufficient for us in every state. It is neither comfortable for ourselves, nor honourable to our profession, to start at every shaking leaf. If we are sensible of this, mourn over our infirmities before the Lord, and faithfully strive in prayer against the fear that easily besets us, he can, and he will, strengthen us with strength in our souls, and make us more than conquerors, according to his sure promise.

A proneness to idolatry is our bosom sin: I have smarted for it. I dare not say I am cured; yet I would hope the Lord's wonderful interchange of comforts and chastisements have not been wholly lost upon me, but have been accompanied with some measure of his sanctifying grace. At present, that is, ever since my settlement at ———, I have been favoured with an interval of ease. I never had so long and general an exemption from sharp trials. When I consider and feel what I am, I am amazed at his forbearance. Surely I deserve to be visited with breach upon breach. But his compassions are infinite. Yet I must not expect to have always fair weather in a changeable world. I would desire neither to presume that my mountain stands strong, nor yet to afflict myself with needless apprehension of what a day may bring forth. O that I could improve the present, and cheerfully commit the future to him who does all things wisely and well, and has promised that all shall work together for good!

I am, dear Sir,

Your very affectionate and obliged servant.

LETTER II.

To Mrs. W****.

March 8, 1766.

MY DEAR MADAM,

WHEN I sent you my well-meant, though free, advice in my last letter to Mr. ****, I was little aware how soon I should be called to practise my own lesson. However, upon trial, I can confirm what I then said, and assure you upon new and repeated experience, that the Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that put their trust in him. The Lord has been pleased to put us in the fire; but blessed be his name, we are not burnt. O that we may be brought out refined, and that the event may be to the praise of his grace and power! Mrs. **** was taken ill, on Monday the 24th of February; and from that to last Wednesday was a sharp season. But let me not forget to tell you, that this visitation was accompanied with spiritual supports both to her and to myself. I hope we may say, the Lord drew near in the day of distress, and gave us some degree of peaceful resignation to his will. Yet the evil heart of impenitence and unbelief had room to show itself, (I speak for one,) and I have the greatest reason to lie ashamed in the dust, and cry, "Unclean, unclean." But truly God is good; he considers our frame; he remembers we are but dust; he delighteth in mercy, and therefore we are not consumed.

I believe the Lord gave our dear people a remarkable tenderness of spirit to sympathize with us and to strive in prayer as one man in our behalf. O what a privilege is it to be interested in the prayers of those who fear the Lord! James, v. 15. I hope I shall consider her recovery in this view—as the effect of fervent prayer. May it likewise prove an occasion of much praise to a prayer-hearing God.

May my soul learn by what I have lately felt, and may you and yours learn, at a cheaper rate, to keep closer to the Lord than ever. After all, this is but a reprieve: separation, sooner or later, must take place. The day must come when all creature-comforts shall vanish. And when we view things in the light of eternity, it seems, comparatively, of small moment whether it is this year or twenty years hence. If we are interested in the covenant of grace; if Jesus is our beloved, and heaven our home, we may be cast down for a little season, but we cannot be destroyed; nay, we shall not be overpowered. Our faithful God will surely make our strength equal to our day: he that has de-

livered, and does deliver, will deliver to the end; and it will not be long before he will wipe away all tears from our eyes. Therefore let us not fear; whatever sufferings may be yet appointed for us, they shall work together for our good; and they are but light and momentary in comparison of that exceeding and eternal weight of glory to which we are drawing nearer every hour.

Well the day is coming when all the Lord's people who are scattered abroad, who praise him in different ages and different languages, shall be collected together, and stand, with one heart, consent, and voice, before the throne. O the glorious assembly! how white are their robes, how resplendent their crowns, how melodious their harps! Every hour the chorus is augmented by the accession of fresh voices; and ere long we hope to join them. Then shall we remember the way by which the Lord led us through this dark wilderness; and shall see that all our afflictions, our heaviest afflictions, were tender mercies, no less than our most pleasing comforts. What we shall then see, it is now our privilege and duty to believe.

Believe me to be, dear Madam,

Your most affectionate and obliged servant.

LETTER III.

To Mrs. W****.

July 24, 1766.

VERY DEAR MADAM,

I AM truly glad that Mr. **** and you go on comfortably. For so I trust you do, upon the whole, notwithstanding the incidental workings of unbelief and temptation. These, like fits of the tooth-ach, though troublesome, are not mortal; and only give us painful but necessary conviction of the need we have of a compassionate and almighty Physician. They are like winds to the trees, which threaten to blow them quite down, but, in reality, by bowing them every way, loosen the ground about them, circulate the sap, and cause them to strike their roots to a greater depth, and thereby secure their standing. If a tree were to grow all upwards, and the roots not to enlarge in proportion to the branches, it would be laid flat upon the ground by the first storm. It is equally unsafe for a believer to be top-heavy; and therefore the Lord suits and changes his dispensations that, as they increase in gifts, knowledge, judgment, and usefulnese, they may grow downwards likewise, and increase in hu-

mility. Since we have been enabled to put ourselves in his hands, let us stand to our surrender, and leave him to carry on his work in his own way. It is a commonly received maxim, that if short-sighted, feeble man were to have the distribution of the weather, we should have but poor harvests. But, indeed, we are as well qualified to direct and manage the seasons of the year, as we are to prescribe what dispensations are most proper to promote the growth of grace in our souls. Rejoice, therefore, my dear friends, that ye are God's husbandry. The early and the latter rain, and the cheerful beams of the Sun of Rrighteousness, are surely promised to ripen your souls for glory; but storms and frosts likewise are useful and seasonable in their places, though we perhaps may think we could do better without them. In our bright and lively frames, we learn what God can do for us; in our dark and dull hours, we feel how little we can do without him; and both are needful to perfect our experience and to establish our faith. At one time we are enabled to rejoice in God; at another we are seeking after him sorrowing: these different seasons are equally good in their turns, though not equally comfortable; and there is nothing we need fear but security, carelessness, and presumption. To think ourselves rich and increased with goods, or to suppose we are safe a moment longer than while depending upon Jesus, would be dangerous. Let us pray the Lord to keep us from such mistakes; and as to the rest, we shall do well. Let us be faithful and diligent in the use of all appointed means, especially in secret exercises, and then leave him to lead us as he pleaseth: and, though our path should lie through the fire, or through the water, we may trust his power and love to bring us safely through, and at last to fix us in a wealthy place, where our warfare and tears shall cease forever.

I am, dear Madam,

Your very affectionate and obliged servant.

LETTER IV.

To Mr. W****.

July 9, 1767.

MY DEAR SIR,

I CONGRATULATE you on that comfortable declaration, "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who now appears in the presence of God *for us*." An awful cause we had to manage in the court of heaven; and when

we expected to be asked, what we could say, that judgment should not be given and executed speedily against us, we were dumb, and without plea. We could not deny the fact, or offer the least amends. We could neither stand nor flee. But since Jesus has been pleased to take our affairs in hand, how are appearances changed! The law is fulfilled, justice satisfied, and heaven opened to those who were upon the brink of despair and destruction. And Jesus did not plead for us once only, but he "ever liveth to make intercession for us." Let us then take courage. That word *uttermost* includes all that can be said: take an estimate of sins, temptations, difficulties, fears and backslidings of every kind, still the word *uttermost* goes beyond them all. And since he ever liveth to make intercession, since he is the righteous one who is always heard, since his promise and compassion are unchangeable, may his Spirit enable us to apply the conclusion, without wavering, to our souls' comfort, that he is indeed able, and willing, and determined, to save us even to the uttermost.

This point being comfortably settled, that he will neither cast us off himself, nor suffer any to pluck us out of his hands, but that he will surely bring us, through fire and through water, to the wealthy place his love has provided for us; the next important inquiry is, since we may hope for heaven at the end, how may we attain as much of heaven by the way, as is possible to be hoped for in this defiled state of things? Do we, indeed, through grace, hope to live with Jesus hereafter? then surely we desire to walk with him here. When I speak of walking with Jesus, my idea is helped by considering how it was with his disciples. They lived in his presence; while he staid in a place, they staid; and when he removed, they went with him. Having him thus always near, always in view, the sight of him undoubtedly gave a composure to their whole behaviour, and was a check upon their eyes, their tongues, and their actions. Again, when they had difficulties and hard questions upon their minds, they did not puzzle themselves with vain reasonings; when they were in want, they looked to him for a supply; and when in danger, though liable to fear, yet recollecting that he was with them, they little doubted of deliverance. Now I want a faith that shall, in these respects, be the evidence of things not seen; I mean, to have such an abiding experimental conviction of his nearness and presence as if I actually saw him. Surely if he were now upon earth, and I expected a visit from him this afternoon, my heart would bound at the thought. With what a mixture of joy and fear should I open the door to receive him! How cautious should I be, not to do or say any thing that might grieve him, and shorten his stay with me! and how gladly, if he gave me

leave to speak, should I catch the opportunity of telling him *all!* Surely I should be unwilling to let him go till he had healed my breaches and renewed my strength; till he had taught me better how to serve him, and promised to support and own me in his service; and if I heard him say, with an audible voice, "Though they fight against thee, they shall not prevail, for I am with thee to deliver thee," I should be ready to bid adieu to fear, and to triumph in the Psalmist's language, "Though a host should rise against me, *in this* will I be confident." But, alas! my unbelieving heart! are these things not true, even at present? Is he not as near and as kind? Have I not the same reason and the same encouragement to set him always before me, and to tell him my wants, my fears, and my dangers, as if I saw him with my bodily eyes? From hence it appears with what propriety the Christian life is called the life of faith, and from hence, likewise, it too plainly appears, that though I am by office called to teach others, I have need to be taught myself the first and plainest principles of my profession. Lord, increase my faith.

I am, with great, sincerity, dear Sir,

Your most obliged and affectionate servant.

LETTER V.

To Mr. W****.

October 2, 1767.

DEAR SIR,

IT is because I love you that I rejoice to think you are in the Lord's hands, and that I desire to leave you there. Happy is the state of a believer; to such, all things are for good. Health is a blessing, and a great mercy, enabling us to relish the comforts of life, and to be useful in our generations; and sickness is a great mercy, likewise, to those who are interested in the covenant; for it is and shall be sanctified to wean us more from the present world, to stir up our thoughts and desires heaven-ward, to quicken us to prayer, and to give us more opportunity of knowing the sweetness and suitableness of the promises, and the power and wisdom of a promise-performing God. Troubles have many uses when the Lord is pleased to work by them for the good of his children, and are necessary, upon this account, amongst others, that we should miss the time, relish, and meaning of a great part of the Bible without them. I hope the Lord blesses you both with a measure of submission to his will, confi-

dence in his love, and then, with respect to other things, you will say, All is well: uncertainty and brevity are written upon all below: therefore may we be enabled both to weep and rejoice as those who know we shall do neither very long here. By the Lord's goodness, it is appointed both for you and for us to have more temporal happiness in possession than the greatest part of mankind have in idea, and yet our best here would be a poor *all*, if it was indeed our *all*. We should be thankful for present things; but, O what great thankfulness for spiritual blessings, for pardon, peace, and eternal life! Our gourds must one day wither; but our portion will be ours for ever. Jesus, the fountain, will be full, when every creature-stream will be dried up. Such discoveries of his presence as we have a warrant to pray for here, are sufficient to comfort us under all the pains, losses, and trials we can feel or fear; but still it will not appear, by all that he will give or show us in the present life, what we shall be when we see him as he is, and are made perfectly like him. O! then let us rejoice in the Lord, and welcome every dispensation, knowing and believing that all we receive is conveyed to us by infinite love and unerring wisdom.

B**** A**** has been sick, nigh unto death; we know not well how to spare her, and she is very useful in her situation, and has been often made (though without her intending or observing it) a teacher to me. The Lord has heard prayer on her behalf, and she is raised up again. I look upon our old believers here, as misers look upon their gold, with a mixture of pleasure and pain. I am daily apprehensive some of them will be called home; but I long and pray that, before they are removed, others may be raised up to supply their places. I wish I had it more at heart. The work seems (so far as it comes under my knowledge) much at a stand as to new awakenings and conversions. I trust you will pray for us, that the arm of the Lord may be revealed. Things go on comfortably in our society: I can see some grow; and I think there are few of them with whom I am not better satisfied than with myself. My coldness and stupidity, when I am retired out of sight, is amazing. Blessed be the Lord, I hope I can say it is burdensome, and robs me of much of the comfort I might otherwise enjoy in the many blessings the Lord affords me. But why should I weary you with my complaints? Let us turn our thoughts to Jesus. In him we have peace, wisdom, righteousness, and power. He knows our weakness, wants, and temptations, and is every way a suitable High Priest and Saviour. May the Lord give you a sense of his love while you are reading this. May his peace rest in your hearts, and his presence dwell in your house. May your children be all taught of God, and your servants be the servants of Jesus. May we all be daily growing in his knowledge and grace,

be guided by his counsel through the present life, and at last meet in glory. Believe that our hearts are with you, and that we have an affectionate sense of all your kindness, particularly in coming to see us.

I am your affectionate and obliged.

LETTER VI.

To Mrs. W****.

October 31, 1767.

My Dear Madam,

I hear you still continue poorly in health; shall I say I am sorry? I hope this is allowable; we have the best example and authority to sympathize with suffering friends. Yet our sorrow should be mixed with joy; for we are directed to rejoice always in the Lord; always—not only when we are well, but when we are sick; not only upon the mount, but in the valley. I rejoice, therefore, that you are in safe hands; in the hands of Him whom you love best, and who best loves you. You need not fear that he will lay more upon you than you are able to bear, for he has engaged his faithfulness to the contrary. I trust this sickness of your body is, and shall be, for the health of your soul; yea, perhaps even now, if you were able to write, you would tell me that as your afflictions abound, your consolations in Christ do much more abound. All the fruit shall be to take away sin; therefore be of good courage: behold we count them happy that endure; yea, blessed are those servants whom the Lord chastiseth. Now he deals with you as a child; he intends this dispensation to revive in you a sense of the uncertainty and vanity of things here below, to give you a nearer and closer perception of the importance and reality of unseen things; to afford you the honour of a conformity to Jesus, who went through sufferings to the kingdom. But how different were his sufferings from yours? There is no sting in your rod, nor wrath in your cup; your pains and infirmities do not cause you to sweat blood, nor are you left to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Then again, our trials are intermixed with abundance of mercies; temporal mercies, which appear exceedingly valuable to those who feel the want of them, and have a load of poverty, neglect, &c. superadded to grievous pains and sicknesses, to struggle with; but, especially, spiritual mercies. In a time of sickness we may see in the strongest light the privilege of being a believer, to have a right to cast ourselves and our all upon the covenant mercies of a God in Christ. Sickness is

a bitter evil, indeed, to those who have no God to go to; who can have no relief from their earthly friends, and yet know not where else to apply either for patience or deliverance. When you meditate on these things, I trust you find your heart sweetly composed into a frame of resignation to bear, as well as to do, the will of your heavenly Father; and though your recovery may be slow, and your physicians shake their heads, as uncertain what to try for you, yet when the fit time is come, the great Physician who has taken charge of your case can heal you presently. Diseases hear his voice. To the Lord our God belong the issues from death. I pray as I am enabled, for your recovery at the best season, but especially that the rod may be sanctified, and you brought forth from the furnace, refined as gold.

I sympathize likewise with my dear Mr. ****; nay, perhaps he is more to be pitied than you. You know what you feel, but his affection will be apt to aggravate every circumstance, and his imagination be busy in painting and foreboding scenes which I hope will not yet take place. I know what it is, by repeated experience, to watch night and day with anxiety over a life in many respects dearer to me than my own. I have been a long student in this school, and can tell you, my dear Madam, by experience, that the Lord our God is faithful and merciful. When he makes two persons happy in a mutual affection, he sees now and then a need-be to put their faith and patience to a trial, and to quicken them to prayer by touching them where they are most sensible; hereby he humbles us for the idolatry, unbelief, and ingratitude of our hearts. But he pities us still, and takes occasion, from our distresses, to make the suitableness and seasonableness of his mercy and power more clearly manifested. Some time ago this was my trial. I know that you then bore a friendly part with me, and remembered me at the throne of grace. I hope I shall now do my best to repay your labour of love. I wish we may learn, from all our changes, to be sober and watchful, not to rest in grace received, in experience or comforts, but still to be pressing forward, and never think ourselves either safe or happy, but when we are beholding the glory of Christ, by the light of faith, in the glass of the Gospel. To view him as God manifest in the flesh, as all in all in himself, and all in all for us; this is cheering, this is strengthening, this makes hard things easy, and bitter things sweet. This includes all I can wish for my dear friends, that you may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus. To know him, is the shortest description of true grace; to know him better, is the surest mark of growth in grace; to know him perfectly, is eternal life. This is the prize of our high calling; the sum and substance of all we can desire or hope for is, to see him as he is, and to be like him; and to this

honour and happiness he will surely bring all that love his name. We need not think much of any way that leads to this blessed end.

I am, with a sincere regard,
Your most affectionate friend and obliged servant.

LETTER VII.

To Mr. W****.

October 29, 1768.

My Dear Sir,

I hope your souls prosper; that the Lord hears from you and you from him often; and that you both live a life of faith in the Son of God, are strong in his might, and comforted by refreshing views of his glory. The great secret of our profession (O that I could learn it better!) is to be looking at Jesus. I am a stranger to the court; but I am told that those who wait there form themselves into little parties, have their own conversation, or make their remarks upon what passes, till the king appears; then every thing is hushed and dropped, and their attention is fixed upon *him* alone. O! that thus, by the eye of faith, we might obtain such a sight of the glory, beauty, and love of King Jesus, as might unite our scattered thoughts, and attract all our powers and affections to himself. But, alas! we are prone (at least I may speak for myself) to forsake the fountain of living waters, and to hew out broken cisterns. Instead of receiving him, I am often looking in myself for something to enable me to do without him, or at least for something to strengthen the warrant he has given me in his word to come to him. The Lord be merciful to my unbelief and slowness of heart; though taught and warned again and again, I am frequently repeating the old mistake, and seeking the living among the dead. I have some faint idea of the life of faith, and can talk a little about it; but to experience, myself, the power of what I preach to others, this is too often what I find not. Yet I must praise him; if I did not, might not the very stones cry out and shame me? for surely he has dealt marvellously with me. He found me in a waste howling wilderness; in more than the prodigal's distress; with my heart full of madness and rebellion, and beset with horror on every side. In this state I was when he first passed by me, and bid me live. He sent from on high, and delivered me out of deep waters. And O, what has he not done for me since! given me to know, yea, to preach his Gospel; cast my lot in a pleasant place; filled and surrounded me with mercies on every side; and spoken good concerning me for a great while to come, even for ever and

ever. Praise the Lord, O my soul! Come, my dear friends, and magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.

I am, my dear friend,

Your most affectionate and obliged servant.

LETTER VIII.

To Mr. W****.

July 8, 1769.

My Dear Sir,

I have been thinking of you and yours upon my knees, and would be thankful for the information I had yesterday from Mr. ****, that the Lord is raising you up again. Indeed, I have heard that, in your illness, you were favoured with such sweet foretastes of the glory that shall be revealed, that death appeared to you not only disarmed of its sting, but a very desirable messenger; and that you had strong hopes that the hour of your release was at hand. In such a frame it is no wonder that you longed to depart and be with Christ; yet, as many will have cause to rejoice at your recovery, I hope you likewise are made sweetly reconciled to life, and willing to wait and suffer yet a little longer, if by any means the Lord shall be pleased to honour you with usefulness in your station. If we look to ourselves only, and consider our immediate interest, who that has a good hope through grace would not wish to be out of this wilderness, and at home in our Father's house, where all temptations and enemies shall be shut out, and we shall enjoy the unclouded light of his countenance for ever, without the least abatement or interruption. But St. Paul, though he had been taken up into the third heaven, and knew more of the state of glorified spirits than was perhaps ever vouchsafed to a child of Adam; and though, from the tastes he had received, he had very strong desires to be at the fountain head, yet was content to defer the full possession of his happiness a little longer, if in the mean time the Lord would be pleased to make him serviceable to his church and people. At the longest, the time is short; ten, or twenty, or fifty years, is but a span in comparison to the eternity that awaits us. And though we should weep all the while, yet our tears would ere long be wiped away. If we consider this life chiefly with respect to the things which make up a great part of it, as eating, drinking, buying, selling, putting on our clothes, and putting them off, a spiritual mind may well be weary of such a train of necessary trifling. But besides that, even the common actions of life are sanctified, and become a

part of our acceptable service, when performed in a spirit of faith, love, and dependence; this life, poor as it is in itself, will become exceedingly important in one view. It is the only opportunity we have to hold forth the power of Gospel truth in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, to show our readiness to bear the cross, and to tread in the steps of a suffering Saviour, and to be subservient to the promoting his cause, and the encouragement of his people. Many of our years were wasted in the service of sin before we knew the Lord; and though they are happy who are taken out of this vain world soon after their conversion, yet I think they are more honoured who are preserved to bear a testimony to his goodness, and to be useful in their generation for a course of years. Therefore, though, if the Lord had seen fit to remove you, you would have escaped some trials which in this world you will be sure to meet with, and would have had your hungerings after Jesus abundantly satisfied; yet, upon the account of dear Mrs. ****, your children, your place in the church and in the world, as well as upon my own account, I cannot but rejoice that there is a prospect of your continuance longer on this side the grave.

When I look at the state of the land, I know not how to spare one praying person. They are the chairots and the horsemen of our Israel; and I hope you will live to be an earnest and prevalent pleader in behalf of a sinful people.

It is a happy and most desirable frame to be ready and willing either to live or die, and to be enabled so absolutely to give ourselves up to the Lord's disposal as to have no choice of our own either way, but only intent upon improving to-day, and cheerfully to leave to-morrow and all beyond it in his hands, who does all things well.

I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionate and obliged servant.

LETTER IX.

To Mr. W****.

December 2, 1769.

My Dear Sir,

I know our hearts are all alike by nature; but I have reason to believe that the general tenour of your experience is very different from mine; yea, you tell me so yourself. Through mercy, I am favoured with daylight which is sufficient to see by; but the sunshine, in which many of God's people rejoice, is not my por-

tion. An evil heart of unbelief fills my sky with many clouds; and though, so far as the foundations of faith and hope are concerned, I can and do rejoice, believing that the Lord has loved me with an unchangeable, everlasting love, and that he will surely do me good; yet I am, one way or other, so beset and cramped in my soul, that as to my frames, I often, for the most part, go mourning all the day long. I trust I have the name of a child in the Lord's family, yet I may fully compare myself to a servant; for I set forth many a dish to my Master's guests, of which (to my own apprehension) I am not suffered to taste. The Lord supports, yea, he owns me, in my public work; he graciously keeps me in my outward walk: these are unspeakable mercies. O that I could praise him more on account of them! But as to the state of things between him and my own soul—alas! I could write a roll that, like Ezekiel's, would be full of mourning, lamentation, and wo. Well, he best knows why it is his pleasure I should live at such a distance, as to sensible communion. He has a right to do what he will with his own; and, so far as his sovereignty and wisdom are concerned, I desire to submit. If he is pleased to accept my worthless name, to own my feeble services, to preserve me from the errors of the times, and to keep me from being a scandal to my profession; though he appoints me a wearisome conflict with indwelling sin, still I ought to praise him. Ere long this conflict will be over; I shall not always be burdened with this body of death. Only I pray that, whether I enjoy the light of his countenance or not, at least I may desire it, thirst after it as the hart after the water-brook, and feel an emptiness in all earthly things without it. If my soul be not satisfied with him as with marrow and fatness, I pray that it may not be satisfied, or take up with any thing short of him. Rather let the whole world appear like a wilderness to me, than that I should be content that the Comforter, who should comfort my soul, is at a distance from me.

In the mean time, as I have but a small portion of spiritual consolation, so I am not much exposed to the fiery darts and black temptations of Satan. He fights against me, it is true, and too often gains advantage; but he is not suffered to come upon me in a way of storm and terror, as he is against many; neither have I outward trials worth mentioning. I believe the Lord keeps a kind of balance with his people; afflictions and comforts are set one against the other; and perhaps this may be one reason why I am led thus. My day at present is easy, and therefore my strength is but small. If he should at any time call me to harder service, I may depend upon his faithfulness and care to administer proportionable support.

Adored be the grace that has enabled us to make the choice of Moses, and to prefer even the complaints and exercises of the peo-

ple of God, to all the seeming pleasures of a blinded world. The weeping of believers is happier than the mirth of careless sinners. I can heartily say, Let not my soul eat of their dainties. My first desire would be, to rejoice in the Lord's presence; but till this is granted, I would make it my second to go mourning after him till I find him.

And may the Lord give to my dear friends who have a more sensible enjoyment of his love, a proportionable measure of a humble and watchful spirit, that you may abide in his light continually.

I am your much obliged servant.

LETTER X.

To Mr. W****.

December 16, 1770.

My Dear Sir,

Blessed be God that he hath given us the beginnings of the life of faith, and that he hath favoured us with any growth; but there is an unsearchable fulness, a rich treasure, which can never be exhausted? and we have as yet received but little of the Lord in comparison of what he has yet in reserve for us. May not a believer be taught something by what we frequently observe of the men of the world? Perhaps, when such a one first enters upon business in a little narrow way, he is in some measure content with a moderate income, and thinks himself happy if he can bring the year round, pay his debts, and, as the saying is, make both ends meet. But by-and-by his acquaintance enlarges, his trade increases, his hundreds become thousands; then he pities his former small way, he pushes all his interest, strikes into new branches; he began with a view to a maintenance, but now he pushes for a great fortune, and, like the insatiable fire, the more he gets, the more he craves. Well, let the world have the world; the whole of it can make but a poor all. However, the Lord grant that you and I may be thus wise in our generation. I remember when the Lord first set me up, (if I may so speak,) my heavenly trade lay in a small compass, my views were very narrow; I wanted to be saved, and alas! I hardly looked further than a bare subsistence and security; but since the Lord has been pleased in a measure to bless me, I hope I feel a desire of being rich. May I, and all whom I love, be thus minded; not be satisfied that we have life, but labour in his appointed way, that we may have it more abundantly; not only to believe, but to be strong in faith; not only to

desire, but to hunger, and thirst, and pant; to open our mouths wide, that we may be filled with his goodness, as well as taste that he is gracious. O what a happiness is it to be lively and thriving in the ways of God; to drink into the spirit of Jesus, and to walk with that simplicity, dependence, and heavenly mindedness which become a son or a daughter of the Lord Almighty! I trust the Lord has given me thus to will; but when I would do good, evil is present with me. On this account our life is a warfare; and it is never well with us but when we find it so. But we have a good captain, good armour, good provisions, infallible balm to heal our wounds, and (what one would think might make even a coward fight) are assured of the victory beforehand. I shall be glad to hear the success of your last campaign. I trust you have been enabled, in the Lord's strength, to put some of your enemies to flight; that some spiritual Goliah who came out against you, has been cut down by the sword of the Spirit, and that like Gideon's soldiers of old, you are still pressing on, and, though faint, yet pursuing. To be sure, fighting is warm service, flesh and blood will not much like it; but the time is short, we shall not fight always; we are going where we shall hear the voice of war no more for ever. A few brushes more, and the King will say to us, Come near, and set your feet upon the necks of your enemies. Then the redeemed shall enter into the kingdom with songs of triumph and shouts of everlasting joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

As to myself, I have little to say in my own behalf. The Lord has appointed me a sentinel to give the camp notice of the enemy's approach; I am ashamed to say it, but indeed I am such a wretch, that I am sometimes half asleep upon my post. It is of the Lord's mercy that I have not been surprised and overpowered before now. Such is his condescension, that he comes to awaken me himself, and only says, Arise, watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation. I have good reason to believe my enemy has been as near to me as David was to Saul when he took away his spear, and yet I did not perceive him. Well it is for us that there is one who watches the watchmen, a Shepherd who himself neither slumbers nor sleeps, and yet knows how to have compassion on those who are prone to do both.

Believe me to be,

Your most affectionate and obliged.

LETTER XI.

To Mr. W****.

April 12, 1771.

My Dear Sir,

I often review my late London visit with much satisfaction; rejoicing that I found so many of my dear friends thriving in the good ways of the Lord. Surely his service is perfect freedom; his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. He is a sun and a shield, a hiding-place, and a resting-place, to them that fear him. May we still press forward; we have not yet attained. There are larger measures of grace, establishment, and consolation set forth in the Gospel, than all we have hitherto received. The Lord has set before us an open door, which no man can shut; he has given us exceeding great and precious promises; has bid us open our mouths wide, and has said, he will fill them. He would have us ask great things, and when we have enlarged our desires to the utmost, he is still able to do exceeding more than we can ask or think. May we be as wise in our generation as the children of this world. They are not content with little, nor even with much, so long as there is any probability of getting more. As to myself, I am but a poor man in the trade of grace; I live from hand to mouth, and procure just enough (as we say) to keep the wolf from the door. But I must charge it to my unbelief and indolence, which have been so great, that it is a mercy I am not a bankrupt. This would have been the case, but that I have a friend (whom you know) who has kindly engaged for me. To tell you the plain truth, I have nothing of my own, but trade wholly upon his stock; and yet, (would you think it possible,) though I often confess to him that I am an unprofitable and unfaithful steward, yet I have, upon many occasions, spoke and acted as if I would have people believe that what he has committed to me was my own property. Ah, Sir! if you had a servant like me, that should affect to show away at your expense, you would hardly bear with him long. You would be ready to say, What is this I hear? Give an account of your stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward. I learn sometimes from family relations to form a little judgment of the Lord's patience towards his people. What a family has he to bear with! Those to whom he stands in the relation of a husband, admit idols in their hearts against him; his friends hold a secret correspondence with his enemies; his children repine against him, and quarrel one with another; his ser-

vants serve themselves. I do not wonder that those who are not well acquainted with the freedom and security of the Gospel covenant, should live in daily fear of being turned out of doors. I am sure I deserve it every day of my life. But he is God, and not man; his ways are not as ours; and as it has pleased him to receive us as children, he has promised that we shall abide in his house for ever. It is our mercy that we have an atonement of infinite value, and an Advocate who is always heard, and who ever liveth to make intercession for us.

How I have run from one thing to another! But by this means I have got through a good part of my paper. Do you ask after ———? Its present state may be summed up in two sentences:—The Lord is gracious, and Satan is busy. The Lord is, I hope, carrying on his work—reviving, healing, sealing and feeding his people. And I am sure Satan is carrying on his work: some he is leading blindfold up and down the town, and miserable spectacles they are: he is stopping up the ears of others. He is spreading nets in all quarters; so that believers can hardly stir a step without being ensnared. He has taken a professor or two in his toils; and now he seems to laugh at them, and to laugh at us. And all this while he is as assiduous in fighting against the peace of the upright, as if he had nothing else to do. We are a besieged city, and it is not to be conceived, much less expressed, what showers of fiery darts he discharges against us every day. "The noise of the archer is heard in the places of drawing water." Judges, v. 11. And I am persuaded no soldier who served in Germany can show so many wounds as some of us have received in conflict with this enemy. However, though he thrusts sore at us, the Lord is our helper. We are kept by the power of God. The banner of salvation still flies upon our walls; and I believe Satan gnashes his teeth at the sight. I am, dear Sir,

Your much obliged and affectionate servant.

LETTER XII.

To Mr. W****.

December 5, 1771.

My Dear Sir,

I was balked on the Friday I dined with Mrs. ****, to find you could not be at home. Then I wished I had staid with you on the Tuesday evening; so ready are we, at least, so ready am

I, to want to recall the day that is past, and correct the disposal of Divine Providence. At length I retreated to my acknowledged principles, that the Lord knows where we are, and when it is needful we should meet; that the word *disappointment*, when translated into plain English, means little more or less than the grumblings of self-will against the will of God; and that we should never meet a disappointment in the path of duty, if we could heartily prefer his wisdom to our own. I considered that, though to have had your company would have been more pleasant, yet an opportunity of trying to bow my stubborn spirit to the Lord's disposal might, at that time, be more profitable; so I endeavoured to make the best of it. I am desirous to learn, (but I am a slow scholar, and make bungling work at my lessons,) to apply the great truth of the Gospel to the common concerns of every day and every hour; not only to believe that my soul is safe in the Redeemer's hand, but that the hairs of my head are numbered; not only that those events in life which I call important are under his direction, but that those which I account the most inconsiderable, are equally so; that I have no more right or power to determine for myself where or how I would spend a single day, than I had to choose the time of my coming into the world or of going out of it. Thus I would believe we did not meet according to our desire, because it was not his pleasure we should. When he sees it proper that we should come together, he can easily lead you to ——— or me to London; though neither of us at present have any prospect of the means by which our determinations may be guided. O! would it not be a blessed thing simply to follow him, and to set him by faith, always before us? Then we might be freed from anxious cares, and, as I said, out of the reach of disappointment; for if his will is ours, we may be confident that nothing can prevent its taking place. When I go into a post-chaise, I give myself up with the most absolute confidence, to the driver: I think he knows the way, and how to manage better than I do; and therefore I seldom trouble him either with questions or directions, but draw up the glasses and sit at my ease. I wish I could trust the Lord so; but though I have given myself up to the care of infinite wisdom and love, and, in my judgment, believe they are engaged on my behalf, I am ready to direct my Guide, and to expostulate with him at every turn, and secretly to wish that I had the reigns in my own hand. "So stupid and ignorant am I, even as a beast before him." In great trials we necessarily retreat to him, and endeavour to stay our souls by believing he does all things well; but in small ones we are ready to forget him, and therefore we are often more put

out by little things that happen in the course of every day, than by the sharpest dispensations we meet with.

I am, with sincerity, my dear Sir,

Your most obedient, obliged, and affectionate servant.

LETTER XIII.

To Mr. W****.

June 2, 1772.

My Dear Sir,

It is true—I confess it. I have been very naughty. I ought not to have been so long in answering your last kind letter. Now I hope you have forgiven me. And therefore I at once recover my confidence without troubling you with such excuses as the old man, ever desirous of justifying himself, would suggest. We were glad to hear of your welfare, and of the prosperity with which the Lord favours you at home, and in the two great houses; which, I hope, will continue to be like trees planted by the waters of the sanctuary, maintaining the leaves of Gospel doctrine always green and flourishing, and abounding with a constant succession of blossoms, green and ripe fruit; I mean believers in the states of babes, young men, and fathers in Christ.

> "Awake, O heavenly wind, and come,
> "Blow on these gardens of perfume;
> "Spirit divine, descend and breathe
> "A gracious gale on plants beneath!"

And while you are using your best endeavours in watching for the good of these vineyards, may your own flourish. May your soul rejoice in the Lord and in the success of his work, and every ordinance and providence administer unto you an especial blessing.

The illness under which I have laboured longer than the man mentioned, (John, v. 5.) is far from being removed. Yet I am bound to speak well of my Physician; he treats me with great tenderness; assures me that it shall not be to death, but to the glory of God; and bids me in due time expect a perfect cure. I know too much of him (though I know but little) to doubt either his skill or his promise. It is true, I suffer sad relapses, and have been more than once brought, in appearance, to death's door since I have been under his care; but this fault has not been his, but my own. I am a strange, refractory patient; have too often neglected his prescriptions, and broken the regimen he appoints

me to observe. This perverseness, joined to the exceeding obstinacy of my disorders, would have caused me to be turned out as an incurable long ago, had I been under any hand but his. But, indeed, there is none like him. When I have brought myself low, he has still helped me. Blessed be his name, I am yet alive; yea, I shall ere long be well; but not here. The air which I breathe is unfavourable to my constitution, and nourishes my disease. He knows this, and intends, at a proper season, to remove me into a better climate, where there are no fogs nor damps, where the inhabitants shall no more say, I am sick. He has brought my judgment to acquiesce with his; and sometimes I long to hear him say, Arise and depart. But, to tell you the truth, I am much more frequently pleased with the thought of staying a little and a little longer here, though in my present situation I am kept alive merely by dint of medicine; and, though his medicines are all salutary, they are not all pleasant. Now and then he gives me a pleasant cordial; but many things which there is a need-be for my taking frequently, are bitter and unpalatable. It is strange that, knowing this is and must he the case, I am not more desirous of my dismission. I hope, however, one thing that makes me willing to stay is, that I may point him out as a Physician of value to others. We sometimes see in the newspapers acknowledgments of cures received. What sheets and quires of advertisements would be necessary, if all the Lord's people were to publish their cases. Methinks mine might run in this form:

"I, A. B. of the parish of C., long laboured under a complication of disorders. A fever, (of ungoverned passions,) a dropsy, (of pride,) a phrensy, (of wild imaginations,) a lethargy, and a dead palsy. In this deplorable situation I suffered many things of many physicians, spent my all, and grew worse and worse. In this condition Jesus, the Physician of souls, found me when I sought him not. He undertook my recovery freely, without money and without price, (these are his terms with all his patients.) My fever is now abated, my senses restored, my faculties enlivened; in a word, I am become a new man. And from his ability, his promise, and the experience of what he has already done, I have the fullest assurance that he will infallibly and perfectly heal me, and that I shall live for ever a monument of his power and grace. May many, may all, who are sick of the same diseases, be encouraged, by this declaration of my case, to seek him likewise. For whosoever comes unto him, he will in no wise cast out."

When will you come and see the flock at ——— ? By the blessing of the good Shepherd, we have had a good number of

lambs added to the fold of late, who are in a very promising way. You would like to hear their bleatings. The voice of joy and thanksgiving is heard in our tabernacles, saying, The right hand of the Lord is exalted; the right hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass. Pray for us, that these gracious drops may be the forerunners of a plentiful shower. For notwithstanding what I have said, wickedness still abounds amongst us in the town. And many, having long resisted the convictions of the word and Spirit, are hardened and bold in sinning to a great degree. So that ——— is like the two baskets of Jeremiah's figs, the good are very good, and the bad are exceedingly bad.

I am, my dear Sir,

Your affectionate and obliged servant.

LETTER XIV.

To Mr. W****.

July 28, 1772.

My Dear Sir,

It was not in my power to reach you after I called upon Mrs. ****. Indeed, that London is such a noisy, hurrying place, I wish you would leave it, fill your coach with those whom you love best, and come and spend a few days with us. Here we could chat without interruption, and I could show you a set of promising young plants which have sprung up since you were here last; if you cannot come to look at them, yet I hope you will pray for them, that they may flourish like the palm-tree, and bring forth fruit in old age.

Give my love to Miss ****. I trust and pray that, wherever she feeds, the Lord will be her shepherd, and will lead her in the green pastures of his truth, and cause her to rest by the refreshing streams of his love. We know he is not confined to names, places, or instruments. There is but one Lord, one faith, and therefore but one church, composed of all who are vitally united to him, and who receive from his fulness grace for grace. To him I commend her, and congratulate her upon the privilege that it is given her early in life to know his name, and to feel the constraining power of his grace. In every other respect, the Lord has blessed you abundantly; and if he vouchsafes you this blessing also, to see your children as they grow up walking in wisdom's ways, I doubt not but he will give your hearts to love and praise him for all his goodness. May grace, mercy, and truth, be with you all.

We finished our little peregrination in peace, and our return home was crowned with new mercies; but we likewise find the return of old complaints and temptation. This evil heart of unbelief; this wicked spirit of self; this stupidity and deadness in the things of God; this cleaving to a covenant of works; this grovelling attachment to the things of time and sense: for these things we groan, being burthened. But we have heard of One who is able to save to the uttermost; and we find that his compassions fail not. His arm is not shortened, nor his ear heavy; and though our many iniquities might justly keep good things from us, yet still he is gracious. In secret, I am for the most part dull and heartless, as usual; but he is pleased to enable me and permit me to speak for him in public. I feel enough to make me frequently utter David's prayer, "O take not thy word of truth utterly out of my mouth." He might, he might justly do it; he might lay me aside by sickness, or what is unspeakably more awful, he might take away his gifts from me, and cause my right eye to grow dark, and my right arm to wither. Sometimes I am almost ready to fear the sentence is coming forth; I feel such a total inability, the scripture a sealed book, and my heart hard as the nether millstone. I know not how I shall make mention of his name again; I am ready to sink at the prospect; but

> It is he who supports me through all;
> When I faint he revives me again.

In the midst of these exercises, I have reason to hope he blesses the word of his grace. I have come to the knowledge of three or four more since my return, who have been seeking him for some months past, and appear to have right views and warm hearts. And I have reason to hope that he is at work upon more than I am yet acquainted with. A young woman came to me last night in great distress; when I asked her the cause, she said, "O, Sir, to think that he died such a death, and that I should sin so against him!" Poor soul, she had no thought of teaching her teacher; but what she said, and the simplicity with which she spoke, had almost melted my heart; though the stubborn thing soon got over it, and grew hard again.

Believe me to be, sincerely,

Your affectionate and obliged servant.

LETTER XV.

To Mr. W****.

September 14, 1772.

MY DEAR SIR,

You are hungering and thirsting to feel the power and savour of the truth in your soul, humbling, quickening, strengthening, comforting you, filling you with peace and joy, and enabling you to abound in the fruits of righteousness, which are, by Jesus Christ; to the glory and praise of God. Are these your desires? He that has wrought them in you is God; and he will not disappoint you. He would not say, Open your mouth wide, if he did not design to fill it. O! he gives bountifully; gives like a king. A *little* is too much for our deserts; but *much* is too little for his bounty. Let me tell you a heathen story:—It is said that a man once asked Alexander to give him some money, I think, to portion off a daughter. The king bid him go to his treasurer and demand what he pleased. He went and demanded an enormous sum. The treasurer was startled, said he could not part with so much without an express order, and went to the king, and told him he thought a small part of the money the man had named might serve for the occasion. "No," said the king, "let him have it all. I like that man, he does me honour; he treats me like a king, and proves by what he asks, that he believes me to be both rich and generous." Come, my friend, let us go to the throne of grace, and put up such petitions as may show that we have honourable views of the riches and bounty of our King. Alas! I prefer such poor scanty desires, as if I thought he was altogether such an one as myself. Speak a word for me when you are near him; entreat him to increase my love, faith, humility, zeal, and knowledge, a thousand fold. Ah! I am poor and foolish; I need a great supply; I cannot dig, and yet am often unwilling to beg.

The other day I met, in a friend's house, a volume of Mr. Whitfield's Sermons, lately published by Gurney. I have read several of them. They are, indeed, more loose and inaccurate than printed sermons usually are; but I think them the more valuable in one respect on this account, that they give a lively idea of his manner of preaching, which can hardly be guessed at from the sermons formerly printed in his name. But in these, I cannot read a page but I seem to have the man before my eyes. His voice, his gesture, every particular, returns to my memory, as if I had heard him but yesterday. In this volume, I think it may emphatically be said, He being dead, yet speaketh. I should suppose his friends will be glad that this striking picture of him is

preserved. Though doubtless the world, who despised his preaching while he lived, will think meanly enough of sermons published just as he preached them.

I am, sincerely, dear Sir,

Your much obliged and affectionate servant.

LETTER XVI.

To Mr. W****.

November 14, 1772.

My Dear Sir,

The heart is very deceitful; I know but little of my own, and cannot see at all into other people's. This is a day in which the many falls of professors give us warning not to judge too hastily by appearances; to be cautious whom we trust, and especially whom we recommend. However, I have great reason to believe that you will never have reason to be angry with me for having recommended ———— to you. I have had seven or eight years' trial of him, and judge him to be a simple-hearted, honest man. I account him a good sample of our flock. They are mostly like him, not abounding in that archness which the world calls wisdom; they are more spiritual than clever, have more grace than politeness, and are more desirous (if they could) to live above the world than to make a noise and cut a figure in it. They know the Lord and the truth; but very few of them know much of any thing else. Such are the people whom, for the most part, the Lord chooses and sets apart for himself; simple, poor, afflicted, and unnoticed in the present world, but rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom of glory.

We jog on here much in our usual way. Only as our numbers are increased, the enemy has a larger field for action amongst us, and we have frequent proofs that he is not asleep. However, upon the whole, I trust the Lord is with us, and preserves us from his devices. Of late we have had no new awakenings that I know of; I beg your prayers for us, that the Spirit from on high may be again poured out upon us, to make the wilderness a fruitful field. Indeed, notwithstanding the Lord has a few people here, and the preaching of the Gospel abounds so much amongst us, I think wickedness prevails and increases at ————, to a dreadful degree. Our streets are filled with the sons of Belial, who neither fear God nor regard man. I wish my heart was more affected with what my eyes see and my ears hear every day. I am often ready to fear lest the Lord should testify his displeasure in some

awful way; but he is full of mercy, he has a remnant amongst us, therefore I am willing to hope he will yet spare.

And surely if he were strict to mark what is amiss, I myself might tremble. O! were he to plead with me, I could not answer him one of a thousand. Alas! my dear friend, you know not what a poor, unprofitable, unfaithful creature I am. So much forgiven, so little love. So many mercies, so few returns. Such great privileges, and a life so sadly below them. Instead of rejoicing in God, I go mourning for the most part. Not because I am shaken with doubts and fears; for I believe the Lord Jesus, who found me when I sought him not, is both able and willing to save to the uttermost; but because indwelling sin presses me close; because when I would do good, evil is present with me; because I can attempt nothing but it is debased, polluted, and spoiled by my depraved nature; because my sins of omission are innumerable. In a word, there is so much darkness in my understanding, perverseness in my will, disorder in my affections, folly and madness in my imagination. Alas! when shall it be otherwise. I seem to have a desire of walking with God, and rejoicing in him all the day long; but I cannot attain thereto. Surely it is far better to depart and to be with Jesus Christ, than to live here up to the ears in sin and temptation; and yet I seem very well contented with the possibility of continuing here a good while. In short, I am a riddle to myself; a heap of inconsistence. But it is said, "We have an Advocate with the Father." Here hope revives; though wretched in myself, I am complete in him. He is made of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. On this Rock I build. I trust it shall be well with me at last, and that I shall by and by praise, and love, and serve him without these abatements.

I am your much obliged servant.

LETTER XVII.

To Mr. W****.

April 20, 1773.

MY DEAR SIR,

IT is time to thank you for your kind letter, but I am so much taken up that I can hardly pay my debts of correspondence in due season. However, I do not love to let yours be long unanswered, because till I have quitted scores, I have but little hopes of hearing from you again. We are glad to hear that you and Mrs. **** were well, and to find by your writing, that the Lord

makes your feet like hinds feet in his good ways, and leads you in the paths of pleasantness and peace. I doubt not but you likewise have your share of trials: but when the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, it sweetens what bitter things the Lord puts into our cup, and enables us to say, None of these things move us. Yes, the life of faith is a happy life, and, if attended with conflicts, there is an assurance of victory; and if we sometimes get a wound, there is healing balm near at hand; if we seem to fall, we are raised again; and if tribulations abound, consolations shall abound likewise. Is it not happiness to have an infallible Guide, an invincible Guard, an Almighty Friend?—to be able to say *of* the Maker of heaven and earth, He is my beloved, my Shepherd, my Saviour, and my Husband; and to say *to* him—

> Let waves and thunder mix and roar,
> Be thou my God, I ask no more:
> While thou art Sovereign, I'm secure,
> I shall be rich till thou art poor.

O the peace which flows from believing that all events in which we are concerned are under his immediate disposal; that the hairs of our heads are all numbered; that he delights in our prosperity; that there is a *need-be*, if we are in heaviness, and that all things shall surely work for our good! How happy to have such views of his sovereignty, wisdom, love, and faithfulness, as will enable us to meet every dispensation with submission, and to look through the changes of the present life, to that unchangeable inheritance to which the Lord is leading us, when all evil shall cease, and where joy shall be perfect and eternal! I trust he who loves you strengthens you in this life of faith, and fills you with a peace that passes all understanding.

Perhaps you have heard that I have not been well. My illness was not so great as to confine me from my work, and the Lord was pleased to give me a peaceful frame of mind under his hand, so that I did not suffer much. For about a week I was set to learn the value of hearing by the want of it; for I was so deaf that I could join in no conversation; but now, thanks to the great Physician, my complaints are all removed.

A minister of Jesus Christ is as high a style (according to the spiritual heraldry in the word of God) as mortal can attain. His department is much more important than that of a first Lord of the Treasury, or Admiralty, a Chancellor, or a *mere* Archbishop. I can wish Mr. **** no higher preferment than to be an ambassador of the King of kings. It is, however, a very serious business; and he is young enough to admit of time for due deliberation.

Many in the time, of their first love, while a sense of divine things and compassion for souls have been very warm upon their minds, have been desirous to preach the Gospel; but this desire alone does not amount to a divine call. In those whom the Lord has not designed for the service, it gradually weakens and dies away; or, if they too hastily push themselves forward into the work, they have often cause to repent it; for the ministry must be a wearisome and discouraging service, unless we are clear that God has called and appointed us to it. I hope it will appear that He who called Samuel of old is calling him; then his desire will abide and increase; and, though some difficulties may occasionally intervene, you will, upon the whole, see the steps of Divine Providence favouring and leading forward from the blossom to the fruit.

I am your much obliged and affectionate servant.

LETTER XVIII.

To Mr. W****.

August 13, 1773.

MY DEAR SIR,

WE are always glad to hear from you, because your paper is perfumed with the name of Jesus. You speak well of him, and you have reason, for he has been a good friend to you. I likewise am enabled to say something of him: and I trust the chief reason why I would wish my life to be prolonged, is that I may employ more of my breath in his praise. But, alas! while I endeavour to persuade others that he is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely, I seem to be but half persuaded of it myself; I feel my heart so cold and unbelieving. But I hope I can say this is not I, but sin that dwelleth in me. Did you ever see my picture? I have it drawn by a masterly hand. And though another person, and one whom I am far from resembling, *sat* for it, it is as like me as one new guinea is like another. The original was drawn at Corinth, and sent to some persons of *distinction* at Rome. Many copies have been taken and though, perhaps, it is not to be seen in any of the London print-shops, it has a place in most public and private libraries, and I would hope in most families. I had seen it a great many times before I could discover one of my own features in it; but then my eyes were very bad. What is remarkable, it was drawn long before I was born, but having been favoured with some excellent eye-salve, I

quickly knew it to be my own. I am drawn in an attitude which would be strange and singular, if it was not so common with me, looking two different and opposite ways at once, so that you would be puzzled to tell whether my eyes are fixed upon heaven or upon the earth; I am aiming at things inconsistent with each other at the same instant, so that I can accomplish neither. According to the different light in which you view the picture, I appear to rejoice and to mourn, to choose and refuse, to be a conqueror or a captive. In a word, I am a double person; a riddle; it is no wonder if you know not what to make of me, for I cannot tell what to to make of myself. I would and I would not; I do and I do not; I can and I cannot. I find the hardest things easy, and the easiest things impossible; but while I am in this perplexity, you will observe in the same piece a hand stretched forth for my relief, and may see a label proceeding out of my mouth with these words—"I thank God, through Jesus Christ my Lord." The more I study this picture, the more I discover some new and striking resemblance, which convinces me that the painter knew me better than I knew myself.

Give my love to Mr. ****. He has desired a good work; may the Lord give him the desire of his heart. May he give him the wisdom of Daniel, the meekness of Moses, the courage of Joshua, the zeal of Paul, and that self-abasement and humility which Job and Isaiah felt when they not only had heard of him by the hearing of the ear, but saw his glory, and abhorred themselves in dust and ashes. May he be taught of God, (none teacheth like him,) and come forth an able ministers of the New Testament, well instructed rightly to divide and faithfully to distribute the word of truth. In the school of Christ, (especially if the Lord designs him to be a teacher of others,) he will be put to learn some lessons not very pleasant to flesh and blood: he must learn to run, to fight, to wrestle, and many other exercises, some of which will try his strength, and others his patience. You know the common expression of a jack of all trades. I am sure a minister had need be such an one; a soldier, a watchman, a shepherd, a husbandman, a builder, a planter, a physician, and a nurse. But let him not be discouraged; he has a wonderful and a gracious Master, who can not only give instruction, but power; and engages that his grace shall be sufficient at all times, and in all circumstances, for those who simply give themselves up to his teaching and service. I am sincerely yours.

LETTER XIX.

To Mr. W****.

August 29, 1774.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE been often with you in spirit in your new habitation. In my idea of it, it is a grand place; a temple where the Lord is worshipped; a castle guarded by Almighty power. If I mistake not, it has several privileges beyond most of the houses in your neighbourhood. Does not the sun often shine into it in the night season? Have you not some rooms so far exceeding the gallery of St. Paul's that if you speak but in a whisper, your voice is heard beyond the clouds? Have you not a very fine prospect from it, when the air is clear? According to my notion of the situation, when you look one way, you have a long vista which would take one a good number of years to travel over, and a great number of curious Ebenezers erected (instead of milestones) all along the road. If you look the other way, there is always a kind of mist, which prevents objects which are near at hand from being clearly seen; but, what is very extraordinary, I am told you can see through that mist, to a land that lies a great way off, and that the more you look, the better you can see. If every house around you had the like advantages, it would be certainly the finest village in the kingdom—a little heaven upon earth. All houses, from the king's to the labourer's, however they differ in other circumstances, agree in this, that they must have windows whereby they may receive the light. A palace without a window would be but little better than a dungeon; and a man would almost think himself buried alive in it. Many splendid houses are dungeons with respect to spiritual light. A believer could not bear the thoughts of living in any situation, unless he enjoyed the light of the sun of righteousness; and with this, any situation is tolerable. You know the value of this light; and you are favoured with it. Therefore I doubt not your house is a good one. May you enjoy it more and more, and now you are withdrawn from the noise of the town, and, (as I suppose,) in some measure, from the hurry of business, may your leisure be sanctified, and a sense of the Lord's presence brighten every hour of your future life; and may you dwell, as Jacob lodged for one night, at the gate of heaven, till the appointed moment when the gate shall open and let you in, to be for ever with the Lord. In the mean time you are happy that the Lord has favoured you with many opportunities and advantages of promoting his glory, and the good

of his people, and given you a heart to improve them. I would tell you how it is with me if I could; at the best, it would be an inconsistent account. I am what I would not, and would what I cannot. I rejoice and mourn; I stand fast, and am thrown down in the same moment. I am both rich and poor; I can do nothing, yet I can do all things. I live by miracle. I am opposed beyond my strength, yet I am not overpowered. I gain when I lose, and I am often a loser by my gains. In a word, I am a sinner, a vile one; but a sinner believing in the name of Jesus. I am a silly sheep, but I have a gracious, watchful Shepherd. I am a dull scholar, but I have a Master who can make the dullest learn. He still bears with me, he still employs me, he still enables me, he still owns me. O for a coal of heavenly fire to warm my heart, that I might praise him as I ought! As a people, we have much cause of complaint in ourselves, and much cause of thankfulness to him. In the main, I hope we are alive, though not as we could wish; our numbers rather increase from year to year, and some flourish. In the ordinances, we are favoured in a measure with his presence. But, O for a day of his power; that his work may run broader and deeper, and the fire of grace spread from heart to heart, till the whole town be in a flame! To this I hope you will give a hearty Amen, and often remember us in your prayers. I am sincerely yours.

LETTER XX.

To Mr. W****.

May 25, 1775.

MY DEAR SIR,

I WAS thinking of writing to you before I received yours, and I have been thinking of it often since. Yesterday I had the agreeable information that Mrs. **** was safely delivered of a daughter. This quickned my resolve, and determined me to congratulate you and Mrs. ****, and your son and daughter, upon the happy event the very next post. I trust that you, and all nearly concerned in this mercy, rejoice in it, not only as an accession to your family, but especially as you see the good hand of a covenant God appearing for you and yours in answer to prayer. This makes temporal mercies, mercies indeed, when we can receive them as the fruits and pledges of special love; when they are sanctified by the promise and prayer, and when we can read in them the name and gift of Him who died for us. Pray give

my love to the parents, and let them know that my heart is with them. May the Lord make them very happy in themselves, in each other, and in their family; and may they think they hear him saying, upon this occasion, as Pharaoh's daughter did to the mother of Moses, "Take this child and bring it up for me, and I will pay you your wages." The Lord's wages is good pay indeed. Who can express the honour and the comfort of bringing up a child for Jesus? The Lord has given you this honour; and I am sure you prefer it to all worldly considerations. May he give you the desire of your heart for each and every one of your children. Mrs. **** and I are now in the line of parents. For though she never felt a mother's pains, and there doubtless are some feelings of a father to which I am a stranger; the Lord has given us a child whom we love as our own, and look upon as our own. We think it an advantage, rather than otherwise, that she was born (if I may so say) to us, above five years old, which saved us all the trouble and expense of pap and cradle; it is a great mercy to us that he has given her an amiable and manageable disposition, so that she is quite a companion; we love to please her, and she studies to please us; and she is, in general, ruled with a word. I trust she is sent hither to be numbered in due time amongst his favoured people, and to know the Saviour's grace in her youth. Help me, dear sir, with your prayers in her behalf. You ask if my soul be more alive to Jesus than ever? I can say he is precious to my soul, and that I love his ways and his service. He is my hope, my end, my portion; and I esteem his favour better than life. But lively feelings are seldom my lot. Blessed be his name, He keeps and supports me. He keeps the flock committed to my care, so that we are, in the main, preserved from offences and from strife. Now and then he brings a stray lamb into the fold, and often he is seen in the fold himself. Then the sheep are happy, for they know his voice, and admire his love. And we know he is present when we cannot see him, or else the wolf would quickly break in and scatter us. Here is our security—that his eye and his heart are upon us continually. Mr. **** (for you ask after him likewise) is well, and I hope, goes on well. I do not think he is lukewarm; nor has his preaching been in vain. He is a young man, and must learn some things, as others have done before him, in the school of experience; but I trust he is sound and honest, and that none who were concerned in helping him through his difficulties, and bringing him into the ministry, will have reason to repent it.

I am sincerely yours.

LETTER XXI.

To Mr. W****.

May 3, 1776.

My Dear Sir,

Will you accept a short letter as an apology for a long silence? I have been working my way through a heap of unanswered letters, (I should have said half through:) had there been one from you in the number, it would have been dispatched among the first; but as there was not, I have deferred a little and a little longer, till I am constrained to say, Forgive me. I hope, and trust, you find the Lord's presence with you in your new habitation; otherwise you would think it a dungeon. There is the same difference amongst people now, as there was between the Egyptians and Israel of old. Multitudes are buried alive under a cloud of thick darkness, but all the Lord's people have light in their dwellings. Ah! how many great and fair houses are there without the heavenly inhabitant. It might be written upon their doors, *God is not here;* and when you go in, you may be sure of it, for there is neither peace nor truth within the walls. This thought has often struck me when I have been to see some fine seats as they are called. When the Lord is not known and acknowledged, the rooms are but cells, in which the poor criminals have license to eat and sleep a little while, till the sentence under which they lie condemned shall be executed upon them. On the other hand, the houses of believers, though most of them called cottages, are truly palaces; for it is the presence of the king that makes the court. There the Lord reigns upon a throne of grace, and there a royal guard of angels take their stand to watch over and minister to the heirs of salvation. After all, the best houses upon earth are but inns, where we are accommodated a little time, while we are doing our Master's business. It is hardly doing you justice to say, you live where you have a house. Your dwelling, your home, is in heaven, here you are but a sojourner; but to express it in a more honourable manner, you are an ambassador, entrusted with affairs of great importance, to manage for the King, your Master. Every believer, while upon earth, in his several callings, is an ambassador for Christ, though not called to the ministry. He has something of his master's character and interests to maintain. He derives his supplies, his supports, his instructions from above; and his great charge and care is, to be faithful to his commission, and every other care he may confidently cast upon the Lord, to whom he belongs. In this sense we are

to take the state upon ourselves, to remember our dignity, and not to stoop to a conformity to the poor world among whom we live; we are neither to imitate their customs, nor regard their maxims, nor speak their language, nor desire their honours or their favours, nor fear their frowns; for the Lord, whom we serve, has engaged to maintain and protect us, and has given us his instructions, to which it is both our duty and our honour to conform. And though the world that know him not cannot be expected to think very favourably of us, yet they can do us no real harm, if they do not prevail upon our unbelief, and make us shrink from his service. And if through grace we are preserved, so as not to be ashamed of him now, hereafter he will not be ashamed of us. If they account us as gazing-stocks and laughing-stocks at present, for our singularity; if they reproach, revile, and despise us, we may pity them; for a day is coming when they shall be ashamed, and when we shall stand forth with boldness, and shine like the sun in our Lord's kingdom. Then, at least, if not before, the difference between them that fear the Lord and them that fear him not, will be manifest. How different will be their language concerning him! Isa. xxv. 9; Rev. vi. 16, 17. And how different will his language be to them! Matth. xxv. 34—41. O, what manner of love, that we who were like others by nature, should be thus distinguished by grace! We knew him not, and therefore we could not love him; we were alienated from him; sin, self, and Satan ruled in our hearts; our eyes were blinded, and we were posting along in the road that leads to death, without suspecting danger. But he would not let us perish. Though when he knocked at the door of our hearts, we repeatedly refused him entrance, he would not take a denial, but exerted a gracious force; made us willing in the day of his power, and saved us in defiance of ourselves. And from the happy hour when he enabled us to surrender ourselves to him, how tenderly has he pitied us, how seasonably has he relieved us, how powerfully upheld us! how many Ebenezers have we been called upon to rear to his praise! And he has said he will never leave us nor forsake us. And, O what a prospect lies before us! When by his counsel he has guided us through life, he will receive us to his kingdom, give us a crown of glory, and place us near himself, to see him as he is, and to be satisfied with his love for ever. How many years did we live before we had the least idea of what we were born to know and enjoy! Many things look dark around us, and before us, but the spreading of the Gospel is, I trust, a token for good. O, that we might see the work running, not only broader as to numbers, but deeper as to the life, power, and experience, in the hearts, tempers, and con-

versation of those who profess the truth. The Lord has removed many of his dear people from ———, to flourish in a better world. Not only many of the old cedars, but several of the choicest young plants are taken away. Should I be sorry that the days of their mourning are ended, and that they are out of the reach of snares and storms? Nay, I should rather rejoice; and I do. Yet I feel bereaved. I miss them; they used to pray for me, comfort me, and often teach and shame me by their example. Pray that the Lord may raise us up more. I trust he has not wholly withdrawn from us. We walk in peace, and have some seasons of refreshment; now and then we hear of a new inquirer. I would be thankful when, as an angler, I catch a single fish. But O, that the Lord would put his great net in my hand, and fill it with a shoal!

I am, dearest Sir,

Your affectionate and obliged servant.

ELEVEN LETTERS

TO

J**** S****, Esq.

LETTER I.

August 8, 1766.

My dear Friend,

I am very willing to meet you with a letter at York, though I have no particular advice to offer. It seems probable, as you say, that your expected interview with the G**** will afford you some further light into your future path. I am in no pain about the event. Man is a proud creature, and prone to please himself with the imagination of influence and power; but in reality, he has none, any further than as it is given him from above. The G****, or whoever else are displeased with you, have their commission, and limits assigned them by one whom they little think of; and when they seem to think they can do most, they shall, in effect, do nothing but as instruments of his will. I trust the Lord will stand by you, put his love into your heart, and suitable words into your mouth, and overrule the minds of them with whom you have to do. And if he has farther service for you in that situation, you will find that his hook and bridle will hold them in, so that they shall not be able to hurt you. As you know whom you have believed, and where to apply for strength suited to your day, according to his promise, I am so far from trembling for the event, that I congratulate you on the honourable opportunity that is before you of witnessing a good confession in such a presence, which I trust the Lord will own and bless you in. Fear them not. Remember Jesus stood before the High Priest, Herod, and Pilate, for you. But how different are the cases! You may perhaps meet with some expressions of dislike, but the laws of the land will protect you from the full effects of their resentment; and even the laws of politeness will in some degree restrain them. You are not going to be buffetted, blinded, and spit upon. Look at your regimentals, and let them remind you of Him who wore a scarlet robe for you, not as a mark of honourable service, but as a badge of infamy. You are a soldier; if you were appointed to march against a bat-

tery, though it is a service not agreeable to flesh and blood, yet a sense of honour, and what you owe to your king, your country, and yourself, would prompt you to reject any rising thought of fear, that might betray you to act a part unsuitable to your character, with disdain. But, O how much stronger and more animating are the motives which should influence us as Christian soldiers! I trust you will fully feel their influence. There is but a veil of flesh and blood between you and that unseen world where Jesus reigns in all his glory. Perhaps you will be attended with such companies of the heavenly host as made themselves visible to the shepherds. How will they rejoice to see you fervent and faithful in your Master's cause! Nay, he himself will be there; and, though you cannot see him, he will be looking upon you, as he did on his servant Stephen. Then think of the day when he, in his turn, will own and confess you before an assembled world. Yea, perhaps upon the spot he may witness his approbation; and if you can hear him whispering in your heart, "Well done, good and faithful servant," you will little regard what is said against you. As to consequences, leave them in his hand, they shall be all good and glorious to them that fear him. He may suffer a cloud to appear, but he can blow it away in a moment; he may permit this or that source to be stopped up, but he can open twenty in the room of it. He can show you how little dependence there is to be placed on the friendship and favour of men, when once we are enabled to be active and hearty for him; but these failures shall only give occasion of showing you likewise, how all-sufficient he is in wisdom, love, and power, to give more and better than creatures can possibly deprive us of. Fear not, be strong—yea, I say unto you, be strong; the Lord of hosts is with you. I am yours, &c.

LETTER II.

April 13, 1767.

I HOPE you find, while you attempt to water others, that you are watered and blessed in your own soul. May the Lord open your mouth and strengthen your hands, and own your labours, if it is his pleasure to employ you in his public service. The fields are, indeed, white for harvest; and though I must govern myself by such views as the Lord is pleased to give me, when I look round and see the state of things, and the miserable darkness and security of poor sinners, I am not sorry that there are those who can and do attempt those services which I cannot. When I see the

heart humble, and simply devoted to the Lord, in whatever way Christ is preached, I can, yea, and will rejoice. Give me leave to suggest, that the enemy of souls will owe you a bitter grudge for your zeal; you will have many eyes upon you, and hearts against you; the work is great, and the heart deceitful. I doubt not but you are apprised of the need of watchfulness and prayer; yet you will not be angry with me for reminding you.

You will have two counter-streams to withstand, either of which is sufficient to bear us off our feet, unless the Lord upholds us; I mean opposition and popularity. The former is troublesome, and in some respects perilous, as we are too prone to catch something of the same spirit. But the latter is much more dangerous. Our friends are often eventually our worst enemies. It is not easy to find a preacher that has been honoured with much popularity, who has not been at some times greatly hurt by it. It is apt to make us forget who, and what, and where we are; and if we are left to suppose ourselves persons of consequence, but for a single hour, it will surely prove to our loss, and may expose us to a wound that may leave a lasting scar, even though the Lord is pleased to heal it. I behooves us, my dear Sir, to keep up a clear distinction in our minds between gifts and grace. I can say, from experience, that it is possible to have a tolerable degree of liberty for outward service, so as to hold a congregation pretty fast by the ears, to make them weep, yea, and perhaps to weep with them, when the heart is far enough from a right frame before the Lord. These things you know: I had them not in view when I began, but they occurred in writing, and I set them down as a humbling part of my experience. May the Lord enable us to walk humbly, and then we shall walk safely; to such he will give more grace. He will be their light, their strength, and their joy. May you ever find him so.

I am, dear Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER III.

June 15, 1767.

DEAR SIR,

You perhaps think me long in answering your acceptable and obliging favour, but I was willing to take a second thought concerning the point on which you desire my advice. I shall begin with this, and may the Lord help me to write as I ought.

I am fully satisfied with your views, and your abilities for the ministry, and should have greatly rejoiced to have seen you upon our list, if the Lord had inclined you that way, and opened you a

door in his providence at your first setting out. But I fear the thing is, humanly speaking, impracticable, after the steps you have taken. Considering your situation in life, and the public manner in which you have preached, I apprehend you have made yourself too obnoxious for any bishop to accept your application. But, as the Lord has all hearts in his hands, and can bring to pass things that are most unlikely, I ought to suppose the thing so far possible, as to submit the consideration of another particular, whether, if you could procure ordination, you could properly, and with integrity, accept of it, and enter as a minister of the established church, with a previous and fixed determination to use your liberty indifferently, of preaching in all places and circumstances as you do now. And, I must own, that if you are determined to pay no regard to those regulations which seem to me incumbent on ministers in the establishment, I think you had better remain as you are. If you are satisfied with your present call, you are now free to act as your conscience shall lead you: why then should you fetter yourself? For, more or less, you will find episcopal ordination a restraint. As to the positive engagements you would bring yourself under to the bishops, I think all is included in the term canonical obedience; to which you must bind yourself by oath. The measure of this obedience undoubtedly must be the canons; and the sense, in my judgment, is obedience to all their requirements, so far as the canons extend, and where conscience does not unavoidably interfere. Indeed, I am not sure that the canons do expressly prohibit a minister from preaching indifferently, when he pleases; and therefore it may seem you are not bound by them. This I think is an excuse for those of my brethren, who having been ordained before they considered or knew the nature of their function, and awakened afterwards, have been led insensibly, and by steps, to extend their labours far and wide. But things are so well understood now on both sides, that for a man to apply for ordination with a design to act contrary to the general rule of parochial cure, carries the appearance of disingenuity; and if the canons are silent, I believe the laws of the land give every minister such a right in his own parish, as not to allow any other person to preach in it without his consent, unless he claims, as a dissenter, the benefit of the Act of Toleration. I apprehend all the church ministers who act notoriously irregular, are exposed to suffer inconveniences for it, if ever it shall please God to permit their superiors to put their power by law in force against them.

As to those who are already in this way, and who think it their duty to go on in defiance of all that might be done against them, I have nothing to say; I rejoice in their zeal and success, so far as they appear to act for the glory of God and the good of souls, and

Lord is pleased to honour them with usefulness; but I cannot so well approve of a person's entering into orders, with a view to disregard the established regulations of the church. In your case it seems not at all necessary, for you would not preach better, nor probably to greater numbers, if you were ordained; for your red coat and shoulder knot will probably excite the curiosity of the people as much as my gown and cassock can do. And then I have some reluctance to your giving up your connexions in the army, and especially as you assured me that your influence, both with the officers and soldiers, is no way lessened by your commencing preacher. The continual removes of your regiment will give you the opportunity of declaring the glad tidings in a great variety of places; your rank in the army will excite the attention of the people wherever you go; and how useful the Lord may make you amongst the soldiery, who can tell? So that supposing you are satisfied in yourself as to your present proceedings, you seem to have fairer and more extensive opportunities for usefulness than any of us, and none can charge you with inconsistency, or give you trouble for what you do. I do not wonder that your family should wish you to take orders, because it would in some measure remove that odium which they suppose you are under by preaching in your present capacity. But I am persuaded this alone would not be a sufficient motive to you. Mr. H****'s judgment has a considerable weight with me; but, in the present case, I am constrained to differ from him, for the reasons I have suggested above. However, I trust that the Lord, whom you serve, will be your best and infallible counsellor, and in time give you clear satisfaction as to what he would have you to do.

I am sorry to see myself so near the bottom of my paper, before I have opportunity to say something of that precious name, Jesus. Continue to look to Him, my dear friend, and he will guide you with his eye, give you support for the present, and direction for the future. If he were upon earth, and you could get near him, would you not lay your difficulties before him? You have the same liberty and encouragement to do it *now*, as if you saw him with your eyes. I need not tell you this; you know it; yet though our judgments are fully convinced that he is as near, as kind, as attentive to our concerns, as ready to hear, and as willing to assist as our own hearts can wish, it is not always easy to reduce these sentiments to practice. Unbelief, that injurious bar, interposes and starts a thousand anxious thoughts to hide him from us. If you find, through grace, that you are submissive, and only desirous to know his will, and continue waiting upon him, then fear not; he will not suffer a soul that depends upon him to take a wrong step in a matter of such importance. And if you

find that he has assisted and owned you in what you have done hitherto, I would not have you entertain an uneasy doubt that you have acted wrong.

I am, Sir, yours.

LETTER IV.

July 14, 1767.

DEAR SIR,

I THANK you for your favour of the 3d. I wish I could offer you advice worthy of the confidence you place in me. Your reasons for a settlement are weighty. I can only say, be much in prayer, and attend to the leadings of Divine Providence, and I doubt not but he will make your path of duty clear; not perhaps all at once, but by degrees, and, though slowly, yet surely; so that after you have been exercised with uncertainties for a season, you shall find that he is overruling all to bring about what he has already appointed for you.

As you seem to think that you may, upon cool reflection, be induced to see it the duty of a minister more peculiarly to attend to the charge of a single flock, my principal objection to your applying for ordination amongst us, is so far lessened. And I trust, if you alter your sentiments on this point, it will be owing to reflection and real conviction, and not to a bias arising from the motives and views you mention in your letter. When a person has a becoming diffidence of his own judgment, he is apt to be influenced (perhaps too far) by the advice and example of those whom he esteems wiser and better than himself. It is no wonder, therefore, that if you attend only to the advice and example of those of our friends who are warm for itinerancy, when you consider their zeal, their motives, and their apparent success, you should think it matter of duty, not only to follow, but, if possible, to go beyond them. For my own part, the love and esteem I bear to many persons in that line is so great, that I know not if I durst trust myself to be shut up long amongst them in a room, lest they should, as it were, compel me to break through all bounds, and totally forget the views I have had upon mature deliberation, and in my cooler hours. But I find it best, when good men are divided, to hear what may be said on both sides. I imagine your connexions have chiefly led you to consider the plausible appearances on the one side of the question. But I can assure you, there are (if I mistake not) some weighty considerations to be offered in behalf of *regularity*. And, by way of balance to what has occurred to you against it, I could wish you had an opportunity of conversing with my friend Mr.

T****, who, perhaps, might be of use to settle your judgment and determination as to your future conduct. Though the difficulties in the way of your ordination are great, they are certainly not insuperable. They were very great against me; yet the Lord opened a way. Some concessions will perhaps be expected from you, with respect to what will be called the irregularity of your late proceedings; and therefore the strongest bars will be laid in the way by your own honour and conscience, unless you should see that, all things considered, it is best for a clergyman generally to restrain his zeal within the bounds allowed and prescribed by law; for, I dare say, unless you see it so, you will not say so.

You may depend upon the business you intrusted me with being kept a profound secret. Though you have not mentioned the person, yet as you seem to speak as if she were not a stranger to me, I suppose I guess who she is; and if I guess right, I congratulate your choice; for it seems suitable in every respect. I have reason to be a friend to marriage; and I doubt not but if the Lord is pleased to give you a suitable partner, it will both add to your comfort and strengthen your hands in his service. Commit yourself, therefore, to him; act so far as he affords you an opening; consult him step by step; follow his providence close, but do not force it. We are prone to pursue things that appear desirable with too much keenness; but in his leadings there is usually a praying time and a waiting time. Yea, he often brings a seeming death upon our hopes and prospects just when he is about to accomplish them, and thereby we more clearly see and more thankfully acknowledge his interposition.

The bearer of this is a simple, honest man; a good proficient in the Lord's ways for the time of his standing. Like most of the flock, he has many exercises, both inward and outward. If you have time to speak with him, he will tell more at large how it is with us.

I rejoice that the Lord brought you honourably off from your challenge, and gave you victory without fighting. This shows his power over all hearts, and that he is a sure refuge and buckler to all who trust him. O that we could trust him at all times, and pour out our hearts before him! When Moses was in any difficulty, he repaired to the tabernacle, and always found direction and support. This was his peculiar privilege, the people could not come so near; but under the Gospel, all the Lord's people have the privilege of Moses, to come into his immediate presence, and tell him all their wants at all times. How happy should we be if we could fully improve this privilege, and bring every thing, as fast as it happens, to the throne of grace. Surely he does not sit be-

tween the cherubim for any other purpose than to give us answers of grace and peace all the day long.

I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionate servant and fellow-pilgrim.

LETTER V.

Sept. 28, 1767.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOURS of the 31st of August, from York, gave much pleasure to me, and to your friends here. I rejoice that the Lord enabled you to stand up for his truth, and gave you the victory in the manner you relate. It is a proof that he is indeed on your side; and I think it is an intimation that you are in the right place. Indeed, I own I could never heartily wish to see you in *our* uniform; for I think you bid fair to be more extensively useful by keeping your stand in the army, and continuing to preach where the Lord opens you a door. As to considerations of a personal nature, I doubt not but you desire to hold them in subordination to the will of God and the calls of duty; and why might not what you hinted to me take place while a captain, as well as if a clergymen? Of this you are the best judge; but, in general, I know the Lord can and will order all things for the good of his children, and especially of those who are desirous to give themselves up, without reserve, to his service, and to cast all their care and concerns on him by faith and prayer.

I hope Mr. B**** and you are mutually comfortable and profitable to each other. I understand his heart is warm for the work, and perhaps your zeal and example have quickened his desire to what I sometimes hear called an apostolic mission, and what others disapprove by the term irregularity. For my own part, I wish well to all, both regulars and irregulars, that love and preach Jesus. But I remember a question something to the purpose, (and that he was a man of a warm zeal, and little under the influence of worldly wisdom as any we hope to be in this day,) who somewhere asks, "Are all apostles?" If it should be allowed, (which I should be unwilling to contradict,) that in the case of some perhaps in your case, there are some circumstances which, taken in connexion with the event of things, do evidently justify their acting in that way which some call irregular; it will not follow, therefore, that every young man who has a fair and peaceable right to expect orders in the church, and a providential appointment to the care of souls in a particular place, would

do well to follow their steps. It appears to me that parochial charge is a weighty thing, and that a minister who keeps much with his own people, watches over and warns them publicly, and from house to house; acquaints himself with their situations, tempers, and temptations, and thereby knows how to speak a word in season to them, and is on the spot to guard them against the first symptoms of a declension, or the first appearances of error; I say, such an one appears to me in a competent sphere of duty; and if he admits engagements manifestly inconsistent with such a close and sedulous attention, he may appear more important to himself, or in the eyes of the world, but will not, upon the whole, be so useful. There is that in us by nature which may dispose us to be well pleased at aiming at great things; and though I trust that many who set out as if they expected to convert whole countries, act from nobler motives, even a gracious concern for the glory of God and the good of souls, yet our own evil is so deeply and closely entwined with the good which the Lord puts into our hearts, that I believe many who earnestly desire to promote the gospel interest, do in some respects hurt it, by overlooking all regard to order, treating the most express and positive engagements as not worthy of notice, drawing a sort of warrant thereby for any person to undertake any service, who thinks himself qualified for it.

As to yourself, my dear Sir, my whole heart goes with you in your endeavours to serve the Lord; what he has done for you, and by you, are satisfactory proofs to me of your call. But I write thus to beg you not to make your own case a precedent; when you meet with young men of right views and promising talents, who seem properly qualified to serve God in the established church, if they are ready to catch your fire, I would wish you rather to assist them with a bridle than a spur; advise them to follow the leadings, and wait the openings of Providence; to begin with small things, and not to think their time lost, if the Lord should give them such an easy service as may afford them leisure for a close study of the word of God and of their hearts, that they may come to be solid, Scriptural, experimental, and judicious preachers, be furnished with an acceptable variety, and prove, both to the church and the world, workmen that need not to be ashamed. Some young men have been loose and raw preachers all their days, by thinking a warm impression of a text of Scripture, and a compassionate feeling for the souls of sinners, almost the only necessary requisites. When a young tree puts out blossoms in great abundance, the skilful gardener pulls many off, and though he thereby lessens its fruitfulness for the present, he secures it for the future. I am yours, &c.

LETTER VI.

November 9, 1767.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I THINK we fully agree in our sentiments about preachers. The gifts, the views, the services of those who are sent and taught by the same Spirit, may be, and are in many respects, different; but if they are sent and taught by him, they will preach the same Jesus, they will equally confess their dependence on the Holy Spirit for their ability and success; and, more or less, he will own their ministrations, and give them living witnesses and seals that he has employed them in his work. Those who agree in these essentials, would do well to agree amongst themselves, and to wish each other prosperity in the name of the Lord. When I see a competency of spiritual knowledge, and a humble frame of mind, I would not look further, nor inquire whether the instrument is a scholar or a gownsman, before I give him the right hand of fellowship. But I own, if people attempt to teach others what they very poorly understand themselves; or if the deportment savours of self-confidence and a desire of being noticed, I am ready to fear they run before they are sent. I wish that none of *us* who are called regular, may affect to despise those who, from a principle of love to the Lord and to souls, think it right to move more at large than we do. And I wish that none in *your way* would censure and condemn *us* for being incumbent upon what we conceive to be our proper work and charge, but candidly believe we may have other reasons than the fear of man, or the love of ease, (though, alas! I know not to what charge I dare plead an absolute Not Guilty,) for not choosing to depart from our present path, and to imitate yours. I say I wish there may be this mutual candour on all sides; but if not, those will be happiest who can bear the misapprehensions of their brethren without being either grieved or offended. It is a small thing to to be judged of men. If the Lord condescends to smile upon us, and gives us to maintain a good conscience in his sight, so that we can humbly appeal to him that we aim at his glory, we may be content to bear any thing else. We shall all be of one mind ere long. In the mean time, may we ever remember, that not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

I am glad that you have been at H————; I made no doubt but you would love my dear friend; possibly I may overrate him; I own he is but a man, but I think him an uncommon one; an eminent instance of the true Christian spirit. This is what is

most taking with me. Gifts are useful; but they are mere tinsel, compared with the solid gold of grace. An eminency in gifts is specious and glittering; but unless grace is proportionable, very ensnaring likewise. Gifts are like riches: if well improved, they give a man fairer opportunities of service; but if the Lord favours a man with great gifts, and in consequence thereof, considerable popularity, that man stands in a dangerous situation: if he is not kept humble, great, soon, will be his fall; and to keep such a man humble, more than a common share of trials is usually needful. My prayer for you and for myself, my dear friend, is, that we may never be suffered to infer grace from gifts, or to mistake the exercise of the one for the exercise of the other. We have need to be saying continually, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." How else can we stand? If we meet with opposition, it has hurt its thousands. If we are exposed to caresses and popularity, they have slain their ten thousands. Jesus alone is able to preserve us, and he is able to preserve us fully; in the lion's den, in the fiery furnace, in the swellings of Jordan. If he be with us, and maintain in us a sense of our unworthiness, and our entire dependence upon him, we shall be safe.

I see that, besides the general lot of affliction in common with others, you are likely to have one peculiar trial, which might be lightly regarded by some, but not by me. Indeed, I can sympathize with you; and, from what I have formerly felt, I am sure nothing but the grace of God can compose the mind under such a disappointment. But remember, he has given you himself. If he sees fit to overrule your desires, be sure it is best for you. The Lord sees all consequences; if we could do so, we should acquiesce in his appointments the first moment. If it is for your good and his glory, it shall yet take place, (you would not wish it otherwise;) if not, he can make it up perhaps in *kind*, (for there is an old proverb, "That there is as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it;") but if not so, he can easily make it up in *kindness*, and give you such a taste of his love that you shall gladly forego all, and say as David, Psal. lxxiii. 25. Let other things turn out as he pleases, you must be happy, for the Lord himself is your guide, your shield, and your portion. Keep your eye and heart my friend, upon his work, and he will take care of your other affairs, and not withhold any good thing from you. All hearts are in his hands; when his time is come, hard things are made easy, and mountains sink into plains.

I am, dear Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER VII.

January 4, 1768.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

My heart is much with you, I trust, as it would be had you the most canonical appointment, and the most regular sphere of service. And I would as willingly hear you in your usual places, as if you preached in St. Paul's. But as I have already answered your letter, this, and more that I could offer from it, now I have it before me, may be little more than repetition.

I hope the entrance of the new year will be blessed to you. The last was to me a year of peculiar mercies! But, alas! as to my part in it, I have little pleasure in the review. Alas! how much faintness and unfruitfulness has the Lord borne with from me! Indeed, I am almost continually a burden to myself, and find such a difference between what I seem to be in the pulpit and in public, and what I really feel myself to be before the Lord, that I am often amazed and confounded; and was it not that the Lord has been pleased in some measure to establish me in the knowledge of my justifying righteousness, and the unalterable security of his covenant of grace, I should be ready to give all up. I am kept at a great distance from the full possession of my privileges; but, through mercy, the evils I feel are confined within myself; the Lord keeps me from stumbling outwardly, and does not suffer Satan to distress me with those grievous temptations which he has always in readiness when permitted. I trust my hope is founded upon a Rock, and that he to whom I have been enabled to commit my soul, will keep it to the end. Yet, surely, I am a wonder to myself.

Exercises of mind are common to all who know any thing of themselves, and have some just views of their obligations to redeeming love. But those who preach to others must expect a double portion. We need them in order to keep us humble, upon which, as a means, our success and comfort especially depend. We need them that we may know how to speak a word in season to weary souls. Innumerable are the trials, fears, complaints, and temptations which the Lord's people are beset with; some in one way, some in another: the minister must, as it were, have a taste of all, or it might happen a case might come before him to which he had nothing to say. And we need them likewise to bring our hard hearts into a feeling disposition and sympathy with those who suffer, otherwise we should be too busy or too happy to attend unto their moans. Surely much of that hasty and censorious spirit, too often observable in young converts, arises from their having,

as yet, a very imperfect acquaintance with the deceitfulness of their own hearts. But, the old weather-beaten Christian, who has learnt by sorrowful experience how weak he is in himself, and what powerful subtle enemies he has to grapple with, acquires a tenderness in dealing with bruises and broken bones, which greatly conduces to his acceptance and usefulness. I desire, therefore, to be resigned and thankful, and to give myself up to the Lord to lead me in whatever way he sees best; only I am grieved, that it is so much his appointment to keep me thus low, as it is the necessary consequence of my own folly and remissness.

I am yours, &c.

LETTER VIII.

My Dear Friend,

From what I have heard, I suppose this will not come premature to congratulate you on the accomplishment of your wishes. If the late Miss C**** is now Mrs. S****, we present our warmest wishes of happiness to you both in your union—a union in which, I trust, you will both see the effect of his love and favour who has previously, by his grace, united you to himself. I was much pleased when you first mentioned your views to me; for I thought you were remarkably suited and fitted for each other, and I had a good hope, from the beginning, that the difficulties which seemed at first to occur would in due time subside. I rejoice with you, therefore; yet as one who knows that the sweetest connexions in the present life are attended with their proportionable cares and abatements. No one has more reason to speak with thankfulness and satisfaction of the marriage state than myself. It has been, and is to me, the best and dearest of temporal blessings; but I have found a balance, at least an abatement, in the innumerable inquietudes and painful sensations which at times it has cost me. So it must be in the present state; we shall, in one way or other, feel that vanity is interwoven in every circumstance of life, and it is needful we should feel it, to correct that proneness in our hearts to rest in creatures. However, the God of all grace has promised to sanctify the changes we pass through, and he will not afflict us without a cause, or without a blessing. Upon your entrance on a new way of life, you will probably find the enemy will change the manner and method of his attacks; he suits himself to our occasions and situations. With such an amiable partner, your chief danger, perhaps, will lie in being too happy. Alas! the deceitfulness of our hearts, in a time of pros-

perity, exposes us to the greatest of evils, to wander from the fountain of living waters, and to sit down by broken cisterns.

> The fondness of a creature love,
> How strong it strikes the sense!

Permit me to hint to you, yea, to both of you, Beware of idolatry. I have smarted for it; it has distressed me with many imaginary fears, and cut me out much cause of real humiliation and grief. I would hope that others are not so ungrateful and insensible as I am; but for myself, I have chiefly found that the things which I have accounted my choice mercies, when I have seen the hand and tasted the goodness of the Lord the most sensibly, have been the principal occasions of drawing out the evils of my heart, seducing me into backsliding frames, and causing me to walk heavily and in darkness. And this moment, should the Lord visit me with breach upon breach, and bring the thing that I most fear upon me, I must justify him; for I have turned all his blessings into occasions of sin, and perhaps those most upon which my heart has set the highest value.

Yet still I must congratulate you. So sure as you are joined you must part, and such separations are hard to flesh and blood; but it will only be a separation for a little time. You will walk together as fellow-heirs of eternal life, helpmeets and partakers of each other's spiritual joys, and at length you shall meet before the throne of glory, and be for ever with the Lord. May you live under the influence of these views, and find every sweet made still sweeter by the shining of the Sun of Righteousness upon your souls; and every cross sanctified to lead you to a nearer, more immediate, and more absolute dependence on himself. For this I hope frequently to pray, and I entreat your joint prayers for us. To which I must add my hope and expectation, that if ever occasions should call you into these parts, you will certainly give us the pleasure of receiving you both at the vicarage.

Your experiences and mine seem something alike, only you appear to me to have a quicker sense both of sin and grace than I have attained. Perhaps you think differently. It is a question that can be decided only by Him who searches our hearts. But it matters not who is best or worst, since Jesus is necessary and sufficient for both. I trust he is my righteousness and strength, and that I do not deliberately look for either elsewhere. But the old leaven—a tendency to the covenant of works, still cleaves to me, and my judgment, (imperfect as it is) is much clearer than my experience. I think I can point out the way to others, but I find it not easy to walk in it myself. However, I am learning to cease

from complaints, unless to the Lord, and would rather invite my friends to join me in praising his goodness and grace. I am not what I would be; but there is a period coming, when I shall be so, yea, more than my heart can conceive. I hope to see Jesus, to be like him, and with him for ever.

I am your very affectionate, &c.

LETTER IX.

November 14, 1768.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOUR last letter (which I am glad to find is without a date) gave me much pleasure. As the Lord has shown you where your dangers lie, and has revealed himself to you as your wisdom and strength, I doubt not but you shall be led in the path of duty and safety. Sometimes, indeed, he lets us make a trip, to increase our circumspection and humiliation, to keep us sensible of our nothingness, and to endear to us the name of Jesus, our gracious advocate. It is difficult to preserve a right frame of spirit in our necessary converse with temporal things; so as not to overvalue or undervalue the many tokens of his love, with which he is pleased to surround us. But, though the lesson is hard, and we are dull scholars, our Master is able to teach us all things that concern our comfort and his glory; and he has promised he will teach us. Indeed, we are in his school from morning to night; every occurrence of every day, all that passes within and without, has a voice, and a suitableness to advance our proficiency. The providences that affect our persons, families, and acquaintance; the workings of our own hearts, the conduct of others before our eyes, whether good or evil, all concur to expound and illustrate the word of God, and what we there read concerning the two great mysteries of sin and grace. The best exposition of divine truth is always before us; and we may read and study it when we lie down or rise up; when we sit in the house, or when we walk by the way. In this way, though we are slow to learn, yet the Lord enables us to get forward a little. And in proportion as we advance, we see more of his fulness and sufficiency, and the emptiness and vanity of every thing else.

I heard, some time since, that you were on the point of quitting your regiment. Whether this report arose from the information which, as you mention in your letter, you had received from the commanding officer, but which you did not think of sufficient authority to determine you; or whether you have received

a further intimation, I know not. Wherever this may find you, I hope it will find you just where, and just as the Lord would have you to be; casting all your care on him, and having nothing much at heart but to know his will, and cheerfully to comply with it. This is a happy frame; for they that thus trust in the Lord, shall never be moved: they shall not be afraid of evil tidings: he will guide them by his eye, direct all their paths, and give them his testimony in their consciences that their ways are acceptable in his sight.

I am, &c.

LETTER X.

May 20, 1769.

My Dear Sir,

I am more sorry than surprised that you are constrained to leave the army. I was apprehensive from the first, that, sooner or later, this would be the case. However, as I know you have acted with a simple view to the glory of God and the good of souls, I trust he will give you the reward of those that suffer for righteousness' sake. May he now make you a blessing wherever he shall be pleased to fix or send you, and give you many seals to your labours, that you, and all about you may rejoice in your present situation. And as you are not now under either military or ecclesiastical restraints, I doubt not but you will gladly spend and be spent for his sake. The campaign is short; the victory already secured; we have but a few skirmishes to pass through; and then he who has promised to make us more than conquerors, will put a crown of eternal life upon our heads.

We were truly concerned to hear of Mrs. S****'s illness, but hope your next will inform us of a happy recovery. I know how to sympathize with you in this article. When we have had such views of the world, that we are in a measure weaned from all connexions but one; when we may have (if I may so speak) but one gourd in which we rejoice, how do our spirits flutter when we think a worm is touching its root! I have been a grievous idolater, and have loved to a sinful excess; yet, through marvellous mercy, we are both spared to this day. But how often has the Lord punished us in each other; what anxiety and distress have I at times endured for want of faith to trust my dearest concerns in his hand who does all things well; and for want of that moderation, with respect to all things below the skies, which becomes those who are called with the high and holy call-

ing of the Gospel. Such is the effect of our depravity, that we are almost sure either to undervalue or overvalue the blessings we enjoy. But the Lord is good; he knows our frame, pities our weakness, and, when he corrects, it is with the affection of a father. I hope he will long spare you to be comforts and helpmeets to each other: yet knowing how happily you are united, I cannot help, when I recollect how I have smarted, giving you a gentle admonition. Beware of idolatry. He, who in mercy brought you together, will not needlessly grieve you. He loves you both, unspeakably better than you love each other, and therefore you may safely commit health and life, body and soul, into his keeping. Pray for me that I may myself learn the lesson I would prescribe to you; for though it is easy to talk and write while all things are smooth, yet when the trial has returned, and I have been brought to a pinch, I have still found that I had yet much to learn, and that when judgment is tolerably clear, the actual experience and feeling of the heart may be sadly mixed and disturbed.

As to your complaints, I might transcribe them, and send them back in my name. I seem to have all the causes of grief and shame that are common to others; and not a few, that I am ready to think peculiar to myself. But, through mercy, I can also follow you in what you say of the all-sufficiency of Jesus. His blood, righteousness, intercession, and unchangeable love, keep me from giving way to the conclusions which Satan and unbelief would sometimes force upon me. It is he who must do all for me, by me, and in me. I long to live more above the influence of a legal spirit and an unbelieving heart. But, indeed, I groan, being burdened. I have no reason to complain of a want of liberty in public; but I wish I could be more concerned for success, and more affected to see poor sinners hardening under the sound of the Gospel. I am afraid that if I am enabled to fill up my hour, and to come off with tolerable acceptance, I am too easily satisfied. Indeed, this is a mercy which demands my thankfulness; but the great concern should be, that neither my preaching nor their hearing may be in vain. However, the Lord grant me to be faithful!

I am yours, &c.

LETTER XI.

January 19, 1773.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE evils of which we mutually complain, are the effects of a fallen nature; and though we feel them, if the Lord gives us

grace to be humbled for them, if they make us more vile in our own eyes, and make Jesus more precious to our hearts, they shall not hurt us, but rather, we may rank them among the all things that shall work for our good. All our complaints amount but to this, that we are very sick; and if we did not find ourselves to be so, we should not duly prize the infallible Physician. Our perverseness and frowardness illustrate his compassion and tenderness; and what, by mournful experience, we learn of the deceitfulness of our own hearts, qualifies us the better to speak to the case of others, and to offer a word of warning, exhortation, and consolation to his people. There is no school but this, in which we can acquire the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to them that are weary, or to be preserved from the pride, vanity, and self-righteousness which would otherwise defile all our best services. It is better of the two, that we should have cause of being covered with shame and confusion of face before the Lord, than, for want of a due sense of the evils within us, be suffered to grow wise and good in our own conceits, as we certainly should when the Lord is pleased to give us some liberty and success in our public work, unless we were ballasted with the mortifying conviction of what we are in ourselves. Yet I hope he will enable us to watch and pray against any actual backslidings of heart, and that the remembrance of what we have already suffered in this respect, may suffice to remind us that we are nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing, but by his power working in us. If he is pleased to keep our eye and our heart simply dependant upon him, his good word provides us with ample encouragement against the remnants of indwelling sin, which will cleave to us while we are in the body. We are complete in him. Our righteousness is in heaven. We have an advocate with the Father. We are not under the law, but under grace. In a little while all sins, temptations, clouds, and veils, shall be done away for ever.

I find that many of my complaints arise more from the spirit of self, than I was formerly aware of. Self, as well as Satan, can transform itself into an angel of light. To mourn over sin is right; but I do not always rightly mourn over it. Too often a part of my grief has been, a weariness of being so entirely dependent upon Jesus, of being continually indebted to him for fresh and multiplied forgiveness. I could have liked better to have some stock, ability, and power of my own, that I might do a little without him; that I might sometimes come before him as a saint, as a servant that has done his duty, and not perpetually as a poor, worthless sinner. O that I could be content with what is, and must be, my proper character; that I could live more simply upon the freeness and fulness of his grace!

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There is no sin more to be dreaded than the great sin of thinking we can do a moment without a fresh application of the blood of sprinkling to our consciences, and a renewed communication of his Spirit to our hearts. This life of faith is the life of Christ in the heart. "Not I," says the apostle, "but Christ liveth in me." His strength is made perfect in my weakness. I am nothing. He is all. This is foolishness to the world; but faith sees a glory in it. This way is best for our safety, and most for his honour. And the more simply we can reduce all our efforts to this one point, "Looking unto Jesus," the more peace, fervour, and liveliness, we shall find in our hearts, and the more success we shall feel in striving against sin in all its branches.

I am yours, &c.

EIGHT LETTERS

TO

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LETTER I.

July 30, 1767.

Dear Sir,

Your letter gave me much pleasure, and increases my desire (if it be the Lord's will) of having you so near us. As I hope it will not be long before I have the pleasure of seeing you, I shall be the less solicitous if my frequent engagements should constrain me to close before my paper is filled. I can only advise you to resist, to the utmost, every dark and discouraging suggestion. The Lord has done great things for you, and wonderfully appeared in your behalf already; take encouragement from hence to hope that he will not forsake the work of his own hands; Judges, xiii. 23. There is much weight in the apostle's argument in Rom. v. 10. Surely he who showed us mercy before we asked it, will not withhold it now he has taught us how to plead for it agreeably to his own will. Though sin has abounded in us, grace has superabounded in him; though our enemies are many and mighty, Jesus is above them all; though he may hide himself from us, at times, for a moment, he has given us a warrant to trust in him, even while we walk in darkness, and has promised to return and gather us with everlasting mercies.

The Christian calling, like many others, is easy and clear in theory, but not without much care and difficulty to be reduced to practice. Things appear quite otherwise, when felt experimentally, to what they do when only read in a book. Many learn the art of navigation (as it is called) by the fire side at home, but when they come to sea, with their heads full of rules, and without experience, they find that the art is only to be thoroughly learnt upon the spot. So, to renounce self, to live upon Jesus, to walk with God, to overcome the world, to hope against hope, to trust the Lord when we cannot trace him, and to know that our duty and privilege consist in these things, may be readily acknowledged, or quickly learned; but, upon repeated trial, we find that saying and doing are two things. We think, at setting out, that we sit down, and count the cost; but, alas! our views are so superficial at first,

that we have occasion to correct our estimate daily. For every day shows us some new thing in the heart, or some new turn in the management of the war against us, which we were not aware of; and upon these accounts, discouragements may arise so high, as to bring us (I speak for myself) to the very point of throwing down our arms, and making either a tame surrender, or a shameful flight. Thus it would be with us at last, if the Lord of hosts were not on our side. But though our enemies thrust sore at us, that we might fall, he has been our stay. And if he is the captain of our salvation; if his eye is upon us, his arm stretched out around us, and his ear open to our cry, and if he has engaged to teach our hands to war and our fingers to fight, and to cover our heads in the day of battle, then we need not fear, though a host rise up against us; but, lifting up our banner in his name, let us go forth conquering and to conquer. Rom. xvi. 20.

We hope we shall all be better acquainted soon. We please ourselves with agreeable prospects and proposals; but the determination is with the Lord. We may rejoice that it is; he sees all things in their dependencies and connexions, which we see not, and therefore he often thwarts our wishes for our good; but if we are not mistaken, if any measure we have in view would, upon the whole, promote our comfort or his glory, he will surely bring it to pass in answer to prayer, how improbable soever it might appear; for he delights in the satisfaction and prosperity of his people, and without a *need-be* they shall never be in heaviness. Let us strive and pray for a habitual resignation to his will; for he does all things well. It is never ill with us but when our evil hearts doubt or forget this plainest of truths.

I beg an interest in your prayers, and that you will believe me to be,

Dear Sir, your affectionate servant.

LETTER II.

February 22, 1770.

My very Dear Friend,

You will believe that we were all glad to find that the Lord had given you a good journey, and that he is pleased to support and comfort you with his presence; and that we all sympathized with you in your present trial, and are greatly interested in your brother's illness. Prayer is made both for him and you amongst us, publicly, and from house to house. And as you know we have had repeated cause to say, He is a God that heareth prayer, we

hope that our prayers in this behalf likewise will open a door for praise.

And now may the Lord direct my pen, that I may send you what Mr. Philip Henry calls "A word upon the wheels;" a word in season for your refreshment and encouragement. I rejoice and I mourn with you. The little acquaintance I have had with your brother (independent of his relation to you) has given him a place in my heart and esteem; and I can form some judgment of what you must feel at the apprehension of losing so near and dear a friend. But though he is brought very low, and physicians can afford little assistance, "to God the Lord belong the issues from death." He can speak a returning word at the last extremity; and what he can do he certainly will, if it is best upon the whole. But if he has otherwise determined, he can enable you to resign him, and can answer your desires in what is of still greater importance than prolonging the natural life. Considering how much his best interest is laid upon your heart, the pleasure he expressed at your arrival, his willingness to hear your prayers for him, and the liberty you find to improve every opportunity of speaking I am willing to hope that you will be made a messenger of light and peace to his soul. The Lord's hand is not shortened that he cannot save. He can do great things in a small time, as you know from your own experience. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, he can command light to shine out of darkness. If he speaks, it is done. Your brother's amiable character and regular deportment would undoubtedly be to his advantage, if he were to stand before a human judge; but we know that we have to do with a God who searches the heart, and to the demands of whose holy, inflexible law, the whole world must plead guilty, and cast themselves entirely upon his mercy in Christ, or be confounded. This we cannot make one another understand, but the Lord can convince of it in an instant; and then how plain, how pleasing, how welcome, is the Gospel method of salvation by free grace in the blood of Jesus! One glimpse of the worth of the soul, the evil of sin, and the importance of eternity, will effect that which hath been in vain attempted by repeated arguments. I hope the Lord will be with your heart and mouth, and that he will afford you the *mollia tempora fandi!* and direct your words to the heart. Perhaps now you may be heard when you touch upon your own most singular case, and declare the manner and the effects of the Lord's wonderful dealing with yourself, which, as it cannot be gainsaid, so neither can it be accounted for upon any other principles than those of the Scripture, respecting the power, grace, and all-sufficiency of Jesus to save to the uttermost.

You may perceive I would willingly help you if I could, though I know the attempt is needless, for the Lord is with you; and though I feel my own poverty in the endeavour, accept it, how-

ever, as a token of my affection, and as a proof that my heart is warmly engaged with yours in your present concern.

I was sorry to be prevented accompanying you to W———, but I found afterwards it was right; you were better engaged, and I should but have interrupted you. I was with you, however, in spirit, as I returned alone in the chaise, which were two of the most pleasant hours I have known for some time. I preached that evening at Weston, from Deut. xxxii. 9—12. a passage which exhibits the history of a believer in miniature—an Iliad in a nutshell. The night was stormy, so that we had but few people. Two persons who were well the day before you left us, are since dead, one of them buried; a poor profane creature suddenly cut off; the other lived at Emberton, but spent most of his time at Olney, a sort of gentleman, young, jovial, jesting, and thoughtless. He was taken ill on Saturday, and died on Monday evening. O! my friend, what do we owe to the grace of God, that we were not cut off in the days of ignorance, as so many have been! Blessed be God for Jesus Christ.

Believe me to be

Your most affectionate and obliged.

LETTER III.

March 8, 1776.

My Dear Sir,

While it is the Lord's pleasure we should be separated, I would be thankful for the convenience of post, by which we can exchange a few thoughts, and let each other know how we go on. You are remembered by me, not only jointly with the people, but statedly in the family, and in secret; and, indeed, there are not many hours in the day when I do not feel your absence and the occasion of it. I find your brother is little better; but it is an encouragement to know that he is no worse. His disorder is alarming and dangerous; but though physicians and friends can do little, there is a great Physician to whom all cases are equally easy, and whose compassion is equal to his power. If he who does all things well sees it best, he can and he will restore him: if not, he is able to give him such a view of what is beyond the grave, as would make *him* desirous to depart, and to be with Christ; and make *you* perfectly willing to resign him. This is my prayer:—that he may find, to live is Christ, and to die, gain; for this, I commend him to Him who is the way, the truth, and the life, who has overcome death, and him that has the power of death, and is exalted to save to the uttermost. That word, uttermost, has an extensive meaning; it includes a conquest

over all difficulties, and a supply of all that is necessary. How totally, and (if possible) how often should I have been lost, had not Jesus engaged to save to the uttermost. And many a time I think I should have given up all hope, but for those two texts, his own gracious declaration, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in *no wise* cast out," and the apostle's assertion under the influence of the Holy Spirit, that "He is able to save to the uttermost." "In no wise," takes in all possible characters. "To the uttermost," reaches to all possible circumstances. He can enlighten the most ignorant, soften the most obdurate, succour the most tempted, comfort the most distressed, pardon the most guilty. O may his precious name be engraven upon our hearts, and sound sweeter than music to our ears; for he has loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and will save to the uttermost, in defiance of all our sins, fears, and enemies!

Your present trials are great; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be overpowered; and your consolations, at some seasons, are great likewise. I know the hour of conflict is sharp, but the victory in which it terminates is sweet. Your conjectures how Dr. **** and myself would behave under a fiery trial, are highly precarious, and seem to depend upon a supposition, which, though it may steal into our thoughts, has no place in either of our judgments, namely, that some believers have a latent habitual power above others, which will appear in exercise when it is wanted. Undoubtedly, Dr. ****, if left to himself in similar cases, would do as Job, Jeremiah, and Jonah have done before us. The grace of the promise is, and shall be, sufficient for our support; but while you are borne up by a power above your own, it is right and fit that you should feel your own weakness. It must, and it will be so, with all to whom the Lord hath given that frame of spirit in which he delights. As to myself, my very heart sinks at the apprehension of sharp trials; the Lord has long dealt with a marvellous accommodation to my weakness in this respect; what supports me when I look forward to them is, a persuasion of his nearness, faithfulness, and all sufficiency; but I know there is a great difference between viewing the battle at a distance and being actually engaged in it: this I find, that in my present calm and easy situation I have not a grain of strength to spare. And when I think of the questions, Jer. xii. 5. I can only say, Be thou my strong tower, whereunto I may continually resort. In a word, trials would not deserve the name, nor could they answer the ends for which they are sent, if we did not feel them; they are not, they cannot, be joyous while present, but grievous; but, in the end, they shall surely yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. The God whom you serve is able to support and deliver you, and I trust you shall have cause to praise him for this

also, as you know you have for those through which he has already brought you, 2 Cor. i. 3—11.

William C**** is one of those who have been lately visited with the putrid fever and sore throat. He had been for some time (longer than I knew of) under a concern about his soul. His illness brought him to the brink of the grave; but the Lord has been gracious to him, not only in sparing his life, but in filling him with peace and consolation to a degree he is not able to express. He now rejoices with the joy of an unexperienced soldier, who is little aware of what he may meet with in the course of the war, and seems hardly to understand us, when we bid him expect changes; for his mountain stands so strong, he thinks he shall not be moved. Thus it is; nothing but experience can teach us the lesson, which in words is so plainly set before us, that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom. But the Lord knows and pities our weakness, and shows us the nature of our calling by degrees, as we are able to bear it.

Believe me most cordially yours.

LETTER IV.

My Dear Sir,

Since the occasion of our intercourse with C****, we listen for the post with anxiety; the accounts we received yesterday, give me a very lively idea of your situation, while you are expecting so critical and dangerous an hour as that which you have in view. I can, and I do feel for you, yet I know you are and shall be supported. Prayer is made, without ceasing, amongst us, for you and your brother. And we know and believe that the Lord, on whom we call, is rich in mercy, and mighty to save. We see many amongst us who have been restored from the gates of the grave in answer to prayer, when the healing arts of medicine had proved utterly ineffectual. This encourages us to hope that our prayers shall terminate in praises to the Lord, to whom belong the issues from death. In the mean time, I should be glad to drop a word that might afford you some consolation in your present trial. I have just arisen from my knees, to take the pen in hand: may the Lord be with my heart in writing, and with yours in reading what may occur to me.

I drank tea last night with Mr. ****. I had sent him my book a few days before, and I found he had read it about half through. I expected he would say something about it, and he did. Though he seemed to perceive and approve the main design, and to be pleased with what he had read, yet I suppose many things were

not much to his purpose. What he chiefly fixed on was the second chapter, and he told me the description I had given of the Gospel was exactly suited to the state, the wants, and desires of his mind; that he had read it twice over, and found much comfort from it. This gave me pleasure. He is, as you know, a man much exercised with a sense of the evils of his heart, and therefore I account him a competent judge. I hope I would rather be instrumental to the peace and consolation of one such person, than honoured with the applause of thousands who live at their ease.

Since I left him, I have been led into some reflections, on the admirable suitableness of the Gospel-way of salvation by Jesus Christ, to all the possible varieties of a sinner's condition. When once he knows himself, and is acquainted with the holiness, justice, and majesty of the God with whom he has to do, no other expedient can ever satisfy him, or give peace to his conscience. And when once he knows Christ as the way, and receives faith in his name, he is provided with an answer to every discouragement and fear that can arise. And here persons of every age, country, character, situation, and capacity, unite and agree. Their views of themselves, of the Saviour, of the ground of their acceptance with God, and of the communion with God which the scripture speaks of, are so similar, that many think they learn them one of another, which is, indeed, sometimes true with respect to the influence of means, (God having appointed to diffuse the knowledge of salvation by his blessing on preaching, &c.) yet every one of them is taught of God, and receives personally for himself an inimitable conviction, which, as it cannot be easily described so as to be understood by those who have not experienced it, (for which reason it is compared in the scripture to tasting, Psal. xxxiv. 8. and 1 Pet. ii. 3.) so all attempts to gainsay it, are like attempting (as we commonly say) to persuade us out of our senses. I remember that three or four years ago I mentioned some part of the Gospel truth to a gentleman who called on me here, and he answered, "If it is a truth, you are indebted for it to Calvin." As well might he have said, because Calvin had seen the sun, and has mentioned it in his writings, we build our knowledge of its light and influence upon his testimony. These are acknowledged throughout the world, whenever there is an eye to behold them. Here the courtier and the clown, the philosopher and the savage, are upon a level. And Mr. Occam, the Indian, in describing to me the state of his heart when he was a blind idolater, gave me, in general, a striking picture of what my own was, in the early part of my life; and his subsequent views of the Gospel corresponded with mine as face answers to face in a glass, though I dare say when he received them he had never heard of Calvin's name.

I am sure I can say, for myself, that I received not the Gospel from man. The little instruction I had received in my youth, I had renounced; I was an infidel in the strictest sense of the word. When it pleased God to give me a concern for my soul, and for some years afterwards, I was upon the seas, or in Africa, at a distance from the influence of books, names, and parties. In this space the Lord taught me, by the New Testament, the truths upon which my soul now ventures its everlasting concerns, when I did not know there was a person upon earth who had the same views with myself, or at least did not know where to find such a person; perhaps, I may rather say, I took it for granted that all people who were religious, were of my mind, and hardly suspected that any who professed a regard to the Bible, could doubt or deny what to me appeared so plain. Your case, likewise, has been pretty much like my own. How different were your views when you left ———, to what you had when you went there, and how little did men contribute to that difference! These things I am sure of, that the proper wages of sin is death; that I and all mankind have sinned against the great God; that the most perfect character is unable to stand the trial of his holy law. When I saw things in this light, I saw the necessity of a Mediator. And in the account the scripture gave me of Christ, his adorable person, his offices, his matchless love, humiliation, obedience, and death, I saw a provision answerable to my need. His blood is declared to be a complete atonement for sin; his righteousness, a plea provided for the guilty; his power and compassion are both infinite; and the promise of pardon, peace, and eternal life, is made to them who believe in his name. He himself is exalted to bestow that faith to which the promises belong, and he will give it to all who ask. This I have found to be very different from the assent we give to a point of history. It changes the views, dispositions, desires, and pursuits of the mind; produces that great effect, which is emphatically called, *being born again*; without which our Lord assures us no man can see the kingdom of God, whatever his qualifications may be in other respects. O, my friend, let us praise the Lord who has enlightened our dark understandings, subdued that natural enmity we felt against his government and his grace, and has given us a hope full of glory! Now we are enabled to trust in him; now we find a measure of stability in the midst of a changing world; now we can look forward to death and judgment with composure, knowing whom we have believed, and that we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Having little news to communicate, I have let my thoughts run at random upon the subject you best love. As Cicero says to Atticus, *Ad amicum, amicè de amicitiâ*, or to that purpose; so the letters from *me* to *you*, so far as they are not taken up with neces-

sary occurrences, should be concerning the love and grace of our adorable Redeemer. O! to think where, and what we were when he showed us mercy; what great things he has done, and is preparing for us, and that he so loved us as to wash us from our sins in his own blood! These are themes suited to warm our hearts, to bear us up under all our troubles, and to fill us with joy unspeakable and full of glory. O that my heart might take fire as I write! Surely I am, in my better judgment, persuaded that life is not worth a desire, but as affording opportunity to spread the savour of his name, to set him forth in my ministry for the comfort of his people and the salvation of poor sinners. I trust you pray for me that I may be faithful; that I may give myself wholly to his service, and, by continuing in it, save myself and those that hear me.

I am inviolably yours.

LETTER V.

March 15, 1770.

My Dear Friend,

Though I have hardly time to write, I cannot be silent upon this occasion. You will easily judge what satisfaction your letters by yesterday's post gave us. Blessed be God—the God who answers prayer, and who alone does marvellous things. I rejoice with you; I rejoice with your brother. Now a chief point in our prayers will give place to praises, and we shall have the sweetest encouragement to continue praying for the re-establishment of his health. If we had let the good news transpire, how quickly would it have flown over the town! But we have thought it best to keep it to ourselves a few days. When we shall meet on Tuesday evening, I purpose to impart it to the people in a body, by reading your letter; my heart jumps at representing to myself, how they will look, how they will feel, how they will pray and give thanks, when they hear what God has wrought! I am willing to hope we shall have a comfortable, a memorable evening. In the mean time there is some self-denial in keeping the secret—for myself, I feel it at my tongues' end continually, and am ready to speak of it to every one I see; but we think, upon the whole, it will do better to come in a lump to them.

You need not wonder if, upon this very affecting and important occasion, the enemy attempts his utmost to disturb you. He fears for his Kingdom, which has already received many severe shocks, in the spread the Lord has lately given to his Gospel; he sees a new instrument rising up, (as we hope,) to deliver souls

out of his power; he knows how nearly you are concerned in these things, and therefore, so far as he is permitted, will cut you out trouble. And you may be assured there are wise reasons for his having such a permission; but all your conflicts shall lead to consolation, and end in victory: and at last you shall be more than a conqueror. *Wolfe* conquered, but died upon the field of battle. *Hannibal* was a famous and frequent conqueror, yet at length was vanquished in his turn. But the believer shall so conquer, in the close of the campaign, that he shall never hear the sound of war any more; so conquer in time as to triumph to eternity. This we owe to Jesus; we overcome not by our own might, but by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of his testimony. He has conquered for us, and goes before us, and fights in us by his Spirit; and in his own time he will bruise Satan under our feet. In the mean while, he will be your strength and your shield; your song and your salvation. In his name you may lift up your banner, and bid defiance to Satan and all his hosts.

Remember me affectionately to your brother. I can truly say, I esteemed him, I loved him before; my regard has been increased by the share I have taken in his concerns during his illness; but how much more is he dear to me, since I know that we are united in the love of truth. With what pleasure shall I now receive him at ———! now the restraints we were mutually under, for fear of giving each other pain, are removed. I think, when the Lord permits us all to meet here again together, we shall have much to say on the subject of redeeming love; much to ascribe to the wisdom, power, and goodness of a wonder-working God, who causes light to shine out of darkness, and has given us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the person of Jesus Christ. What an amazing change in our state, in our heart, in our views, is the result of this discovery! Old things pass away; all things become new. Then we see how unavoidably we must be *men wondered at* by all who have not experienced the same things; and we are content to be so for his sake who has loved us, and to account his cross our glory.

Believe me to be, my dear Sir,

Most affectionately yours,

In the nearest and strongest bond of friendship.

LETTER VI.

Charles Square, April 29, 1780.

My Dear Friend,

We seldom send any thing to a friend with a more interested and selfish view than a frank; for we expect not only to have it returned, but that what we send empty should be returned full. I hope when the weather will not allow you to be all day in the garden, you are preparing a cargo for my frank; letters, essays, thoughts, bon mots, tales, fables; in a word, miscellanies of all kinds, in prose or verse, whatever bears the signature of your hand, or of your manner, will be welcome; and as long as you find materials, I will endeavour to find franks, and to send you pepper-corns of thanks in return, as often as I can.

The recovery of my arm has advanced happily without interruption. I can now put on my great coat, have almost done with my sling, and hope, in a few days more, to be released from the bandages. Blessed be the Lord, my best physician and friend, my present and all sufficient help! I have seen no reason yet to regret my fall, nor have I been permitted to do it; yet I may consider it as a chastisement, though of a gentle and merciful kind. A sinner need not spend much time in searching out the cause of an affliction; but that the afflictions of such a sinner as I should be so seldom, so moderate, so soon removed, depends upon reasons which I should never have known but by the word of God. There I am taught to spell his name, "The Lord, the Lord God, long suffering, abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin;" and thus I read the reason why I am not consumed.

The spring, long-retarded, begins to force its way, and to make its appearance in the trees which surround our square. The close behind our garden seems as green as your meadows, and the cows that are feeding in it have very much the look of country cows. St. Luke's church affords us a sort of substitute for ——— steeple. Islington (by the help of an imagination which loves to concur in putting an agreeable deception upon itself) passes for ———; and the New River, if it did not run under ground hereabouts, would soon obtain a new name, and be called the Ouse. We take the same liberty with persons as with places, and cannot walk much in the streets without meeting a somebody that recalls somebody else to our minds. But to impose upon ourselves so far as to think any place like Orchard Side or any persons like Mrs. **** or Mr. ****, exceeds our present attainment in the art

of substitution. In other respects, our situation is, upon the whole, so well, that I may apply to either of you—

Excepto quod non simul esses, cætera lætus.

But, indeed, a removal from two such dear friends is a dislocation, and gives me at times a mental feeling, something analagous to what my body felt when my arm was forced from its socket. I live in hopes that this mental dislocation will one day be happily reduced likewise, and that we shall come together again *as bone to its bone*. The connexion which the Lord himself formed between us, was undoubtedly formed for *eternity*; but I trust we shall have more of the pleasure and comfort of it *in time*. And that I shall yet hear you say, "Come, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together, for he hath turned my mourning into joy, and he hath taken off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness."

How the world goes, I know not; for I seldom see a newspaper for a fortnight together; when I do, I meet with so little to please me, that I seem rather to prefer a state of ignorance, which gives me more scope for hoping for the best. The prevalence of wickedness and insensibility, however, forces itself upon my notice, whether I will or no. And I am afraid, in the contentions which are fomenting and spreading throughout the kingdom, I see such seeds of trouble as were sown in the early part of Charles the First's reign, and which quickly produced such plentiful crops of confusion and misery. Yea, I am afraid the present times are worse; there is an equal degree of party rage, without any portion of the public spirit which undoubtedly influenced many individuals in those days. I see but few Hydes or Falklands amongst the courtiers; but few Hampdens Pyms, or Blakes, to dignify the opposition. The pretences on each side are but a thin veil, through which it is easy to perceive that the contest is chiefly between the ins and the outs, and that while some plead for arbitrary power, under the name of constitutional prerogative; others, who clamour for liberty, mean nothing better by the word than licentiousness. So that if my calling as a christian would permit me to take an active part in this uproar, (which, in my view, it does not,) I must still remain neuter, till I could find more men of principle on one side or the other to associate with. I must be content to look on, and patiently wait the issue, and should be ready to sink with apprehension, but for two supporting considerations. The first, that the Lord reigns, and will surely accomplish his own wise and gracious promises. The second, that in the midst of all this confusion, he is manifestly

spreading the light of his Gospel, and gathering sinners into his fold. While he maintains and multiplies the means of grace amongst us, and increases the number of praying souls to stand in the breach, I think we have a pledge that we shall not be given up, that our motto will be no worse than "cast down, but not destroyed." There is a third, a personal ground of comfort. He has said, it shall be well with them that fear God, and his word is sure. His people have properly nothing to lose, have nothing to fear, for he is their sun and shield, and exceeding great reward. His power, providence, presence, and all-sufficiency, will lead them safely, and, upon the whole, comfortably through every possible change, and bring them to their unchangeable rest.

Mrs. **** is not at home, but she knows what I am about, and sends her best love. She has very tolerable health. I was at first afraid the hurry and anxiety of her spirits, on account of my fall, would have brought a return of all her nervous complaints. I felt more for her than for myself, while the four men were almost displacing my bones which were right, in order to put that right which was out of place. But while I was in that attitude, I may say, with Nehemiah, "So I prayed unto the God of heaven;" I prayed for her, and the Lord heard me. She was at first exceedingly terrified, and felt the effects of the shock for a little time, but I hope they are quite subsided.

I am, dearest Sir,

Your most affectionate and obliged.

LETTER VII.

Charles Square, May 6, 1780.

My Dear Sir,

You will have no reason to apply to me, Luke vii. 32. For when you pipe, I am ready to dance; and when you mourn, a cloud comes over my brow, and a tear stands a tiptoe in my eye. I observe your letters usually begin and end in the allegro strain, and you put the more serious part in the middle: as this seems the fittest place for it, I will try to imitate you, though it will be something, if either my beginning or my close should entitle me to your smile, except you smile at the presumption of your humble imitator, and recollect the fable of the frog, who tried to imitate the ox.

On Thursday I attended, in my robes, the church-wardens and several of the gentlemen of the parish. We had large nosegays in our hands, and, all but myself, favours in their hats, accompa-

nied by a number of little boys smartly dressed, and carrying white wands. Thus marshalled and accoutred, we paraded the streets, and a tall man who has some other name, but is best known to me by that of the organ-blower, pointing successively to the marks, corners, and abutments which distinguished ours from the circumjacent parishes, proclaimed at each the boundary of the parish of St. ———. The chorus, consisting of a number of huzzas, was performed by the youths, who likewise beat the marks and walls with their wands. This ostentatious service draws abundance of eyes; ladies, gentlemen, porters, and carters, all stop, and turn, and stare. After the procession, and distributing ribbons and cakes to the parishioners, we divided into two parties for dinner; all passed with much decorum and courtesy, and nothing happened that made me sorry I was among them. This little parochial farce is acted annually on Ascension-day. I am afraid my overture is very dull, but if you could suppose it the translation of a fragment dug out of Herculaneum, giving an account of some custom that obtained *(mutatis mutandis)* in ancient Rome, then both the ears of your classical attention would doubtless be nailed to the subject.

Do not wonder that I prize your letters. Besides the merit which friendship puts on them, as being yours, you always send me something I should value from a stranger. Some thoughts in your last I shall be the better for, if it be not my own fault. How wonderful is that tincture, that inexpressible something, which gives your sentiments, when you speak of yourself, so gloomy a cast, while, in all other respects, it leaves your faculties in full bloom and vigour! How strange that your judgment should be clouded in one point only, and that a point so obvious and strikingly clear to every body who knows you! How strange that a person who considers the earth, the planets, and the sun itself as mere bawbles, compared with the friendship and favour of God their Maker, should think the God who inspired him with such an idea, could ever forsake and cast off the soul which he has taught to love him! How strange is it, I say, that you should hold tenaciously both parts of a contradiction! Though your comforts have been so long suspended, I know not that I ever saw you for a single day since your calamity came upon you, in which I could not perceive as clear and satisfactory evidence that the grace of God was with you, as I could in your brighter and happier times. In the midst of all the little amusements, which you call trifling, and which I would be very thankful you can attend to, in your present circumstances, it is as easy to see who has your heart, and which way your desires tend, as to see your shadow when you stand in the sun.

* * * * * * * *

I shall enlarge my commission for filling the franks and parcels which I hope to receive from you. I have a little back parlour, which bears the name of my study. It is at present much unfurnished, and I must beg you therefore to send me a few mountains and valleys, woods, streams, and ducks, to ornament the walls; in return, I will join my praises to Mrs. ****'s and your own, which, indeed, considering how destitute I am of taste and virtù, will be but like putting a cypher on the wrong side of a significant figure, which adds a round 0 to the line, but nothing to the sum. But let the great boast of their Raphaels and their Titians, it shall suffice for me if I may describe on the pieces in my study, **** *pinxit*.

My bandage is taken off, and my arm almost in statu quo. I wish to be thankful to Him who maketh sore, and bindeth up, who woundeth, and his hands make whole.

Accept our best love, and believe me to be,

Most affectionately yours.

LETTER VIII.

Charles Square, Hoxton, June 3, 1780.

My Dear Friend,

On Monday we went to Greenwich, and returned to-day time enough to preach my monthly preparation sermon in the forenoon. The visit was as pleasant as a kind reception could make it; but there is a something necessary to make one "Totus teres et rotundus" in our proposed schemes for pleasure, which it is not in the creature's power to supply. However, I had much to be thankful for, and particularly that Mrs. **** was well at the time. Two very agreeable hours I spent *solus* in the park, a situation which I think is hardly to be equalled upon the earth. Rural prospects equally striking, or more so, may be found in abundance; but the embellishments of such a city, at a distance so convenient to the eye, and of such a river with the navigation, are local advantages peculiar to the spot. Were I to traverse the park daily, perhaps when familiarized to the objects, the effects would not be so great. But I believe twenty years or more have passed since I was there, and therefore all appeared to me in a manner new. The cloud of smoke hanging over London, to which every house contributed its quota, led me to mor-

alize. I thought it an emblem of the accumulated stock of misery, arising from the trials and afflictions of individuals within my view. I am persuaded a detail of these, were our minds capable of receiving it, would have the effect of the cave of Trophonius, and give such a solidity to our features, that no occasional incident, however jocular, would move our laughter, or even extort a smile. A person would hazzard his reputation for humanity, who was disposed to be merry among the lunatics in Bethlehem, or in the midst of a group of agonizing sufferers in Bartholomew's Hospital, or a field of battle. And what is the world at large, but a more extensive and diversified scene of wretchedness, where phrensy and despair, anxiety, pain, want, and death, have their respective *wards* filled with patients? I thought it likewise an emblem of that cloud of sin which is continually accending with a mighty cry in the ears of the Lord of hosts. Sin overspreads the earth; but in London the number and impunity of offenders, joined with the infidelity and dissipation of the times, make it a kind of hot-bed or nursery for wickedness. Sin is studied as a science, and there are professors and inventors of evil things, in a variety of branches, who have an unhappy address in teaching others to sin with an *eclat*. Could we have knowledge of the monstrous enormities and villanies which are committed in a single day, within the compass of the prospect I had from Greenwich Park, or Blackheath, it would make us groan and tremble. Such were a part of my meditations, accompanied with some degree of praise to Him who snatched me from that state, wherein I stood an *Antisignanus* in iniquity, and brought me to a knowledge of salvation and peace.

I was rather alarmed yesterday. The Protestant Association, under the influence of Lord George Gordon, met in St. George's Fields, and from thence paraded through the city to Westminster, joined and accompanied in their march by many thousands of the blackguards from all quarters; they walked, however, with great decency and quietness; how they behaved in the avenues to the Parliament-house, and what weight their petition acquired from such a respectable attendance, I have not yet heard. But I believe things went on pretty well considering the multitude assembled. However, I do not much like these motions and commotions, and my forboding spirit fancies no small resemblance between the present appearances and those which were forerunners of the civil wars.

I am your very affectionate and endeared friend,

And obliged servant.

EIGHTEEN LETTERS

TO

THE REV. MR. S*****.

LETTER I.

November 27, 1767.

My Dear Friend,

I congratulate you and Mrs. **** on your settlement at B———, in your new house, where I hope the Lord will dwell with and bless you both, and make you blessings to many.

Visits, &c. of ceremony are burdensome; yet something is due to civility; and, though we cannot have equal comfort in all our acquaintance, it is best to be on peaceful and neighbourly terms. You need not have much of it, but so far as it cannot be prudently avoided, bear it as your cross. I would not wish to have you attempt to force spiritual things too much upon those who do not like them; or to expect them from those who have not experienced them. But, like a physician among sick people, watch opportunities of doing them good if possible.

You know not what the Lord has to do; some whom you now can hardly bear, may prove your comforts hereafter; and if in the meantime they are disposed to be friendly, and show you good offices, they have a right to a return in the same way.

I approve and rejoice in your faithfulness, but in some things, perhaps, you would do as well to keep your mind more to yourself; I mean in your free and unreserved speaking of ministers, &c. Our Lord's direction to his disciples, in something of a similar case, was, Let them alone. So far as it is needful to withstand them, do so in the Lord's strength; but in mixed conversation, it is a good rule to say nothing, without a just call, to the disadvantage of others. I must agree with Mr. B****, that such expressions as, drowsy Dissenters, are as well avoided in public prayer, being more likely to give offence than to do good. And I thought some few things you said at Mr. W****'s might as well have been spared, considering the spirit of some of your hearers. I endeavour to bear a testimony against every thing wrong, but as *in professors*, without distinguishing between church and meeting; for, alas! the best of us have cause for humiliation. My

judgment of many persons and things agrees with yours; but I have seen there is good sense in the old proverb, "Least said, soonest mended." We are sometimes mistaken in our spirits, and though it becomes us to be plain and open upon proper occasions, it is not our duty to be very busy in disturbing a nest of hornets. I was once in a large company where very severe things were spoken of Mr. W****, when one person seasonably observed, that though the Lord was pleased to effect conversion and edification by a variety of means, he had never known any body convinced of error by what was said of him behind his back. This was about thirteen years ago, and it has been on my mind as a useful hint ever since.

Believe me to be affectionately yours.

LETTER II.

July 15, 1768.

My Dear Friend,

I was glad to hear that you and Mrs. S**** were again safely restored to each other, and that the Lord had freed *you* from your complaint. No doubt it was far from pleasing to be so straitened at R——. But to be made in a measure, submissive to the Lord's will, to appear to a disadvantage at those times and places when, perhaps, we should particularly desire to do our best; I say, to be content to appear weak and poor, from a real sense of our weakness and poverty in his sight, to see his wisdom and love in appointing us such humbling dispensations, and to submit to them, is a nobler attainment than to be able to speak with the tongue of an angel. The Lord, who opened the mouth of Balaam's ass, could, if he had pleased, have enabled it to have preached a sermon an hour long, and with as much method and accuracy as the most learned in academies or universities. Speaking is but a gift, and if he is pleased sometimes to open our mouths freely, we know not but a wicked man might equal or exceed us. But grace is the peculiar blessing which he bestows upon his dear children, and upon them only. Your streams may sometimes run low, but only when he sees it good and necessary; at other times you shall be as if you were taking water from Ezekiel's river. However, rejoice in this, that the fountain is yours, and nothing can cut you off from it.

I am affectionately yours.

LETTER III.

September 30, 1768.

My Dear Friend,

This has been a sort of busy week; but seldom have I felt more unfit to teach others, or more unfit to preach to my own heart. O, these outside services are wearisome things, when the Lord leaves us to feel our own hardness and emptiness! But I would learn to glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. As to myself, though I have cause enough to be humbled, I have none to be cast down, if my righteousness is in heaven. And as to my ministry, I ought to desire it may appear, that the excellency of the power is of God, and that there is nothing in me but weakness.

> Dust and ashes is my name,
> My all is sin and misery.

So we say, so we believe, and yet we would fain go forth as if we were wise and good. The Lord help us to discover self in all its various windings, to resist it by the sword of the Spirit, as we would the devil, for surely it is his great engine. It would be a fine thing to have the knowledge of Paul and the eloquence of Apollos united in our dear persons; so that we might be the tip-top characters in the foolish dispute among professors, Who is the best preacher? But I can tell you a finer thing, and more within our reach, because it is what the Lord invites even the meanest of the flock to seek for; I mean the character to which the promise is made, Isa. lvii. 15. Let the discourses of others be admired for ingenuity, learning, or pathos, but may we be ambitious that ours may savour of a broken and contrite spirit; then shall we be best able to commend a precious Saviour, and then we may warrantably hope the Lord will not suffer us to speak in vain.

I am affectionately yours, in the best bonds.

LETTER IV.

February 17, 1769.

Dear Sir,

I cannot agree with your friends, or with Witsius, respecting the degrees in glory. Perhaps we are not capable of stating the question properly in this dark world. I see no force in the argument drawn from 1 Cor. xv. 40, 41; or rather, that does not

appear to me the sense of the passage, or that the apostle had any respect to degrees of glory. The text in Matt. xix. 28 may be compared with Rev. iii. 21. However, admitting such degrees, perhaps they will not be distributed (according to human expectation) to such as have been most employed in active life, Matt. x. 41. As wickedness is rated by the judgment of God, not according to the number of outward acts, but by what the heart would do, had opportunity offered Matt. v. 28; so the Lord will graciously accept the desires of his people. and they shall in no wise lose their reward, because his providence has appointed them a narrower sphere.

One man like Mr. Whitfield is raised up to preach the Gospel with success through a considerable part of the earth; another is called to the humbler service of sweeping the streets, or cleaning this great minister's shoes. Now, if the latter is thankful and content in his poor station, if he can look without envy, yea, with much love, on the man that is honoured; if he can rejoice in the good that is done, or pray for the success of those whom the Lord sends, I see not why he may not be as great a man in the sight of God, as he who is followed and admired by thousands.

Upon a supposition of degrees of glory, I should think it probable the best Christian will have the highest place. And I am inclined to think, that if you and I were to travel in search of the best Christian in the land, or were qualified to distinguish who deserved the title, it is more than two to one we should not find the person in a pulpit, or any public office of life; perhaps some old woman at her wheel, or some bed-rid person, hid from the knowledge of the world, in a mud-walled cottage, would strike our attention more than any of the doctors or reverends with whom we are acquainted. Let us not measure men, much less ourselves, by gifts or services. One grain of grace is worth abundance of gifts. To be self-abased; to be filled with a spirit of love, and peace, and gentleness; to be dead to the world; to have the heart deeply affected with a sense of the glory and grace of Jesus; to have our will bowed to the will of God; these are the great things, more valuable, if compared in the balance of the sanctuary, than to be an instrument of converting a province, or a nation: see 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3. In a word, I should think, from Luke, vii. 47, that those who love most will be most happy; that those who have most forgiven, will love most. And as, in the present life, every believer thinks himself a peculiar instance of mercy, and sees his sins in a peculiar light of aggravation, I apprehend it to be so hereafter. The sin of nature is equal in all; and so I think would actual sin be likewise, but for the differences made by the restraining grace and providence of God. *He* is not, perhaps, in the sight of God, the greatest sinner, who has committed the most

notorious acts of sin in the sight of man. We should not judge one wolf to be fiercer than another because he had opportunity of devouring more sheep. Any other wolf would have done the same, in the same circumstances. So in sin. So (think I) in grace. The Lord's people, every one of them, would be glad to do him as much service, and to yield him as much honour, as any of the number have attained to. But he divides severally, to one 60, to one 30, to one 100, as he pleases; but they are all accepted in the same righteousness; equally united to Jesus, and, as to the good works on which a supposed difference is afterwards to be founded, I apprehend those that have most, will gladly do by them as Paul did by his legal righteousness, count them loss and dung for the excellency of Christ Jesus the Lord; Matt. xxv. 37. But it may be said, is then nothing to be expected for so many trials and sufferings as some ministers are called to for the sake of the Gospel? In my judgment, he that does not find a reward in being excited, supported, enabled by the Holy Spirit of God in the work of the Gospel; who does not think, that to have multiplied labours owned to the conversion even of a few souls, is a great reward; who does not account the ministry of the Gospel, with grace to be faithful in the discharge of it, a reward and honour in itself sufficient to overbalance all the difficulties it may expose him to; whoever, I say, does not thus think of the service of Jesus in the Gospel, has some reason to question his right to the lowest degree of glory, or, at least, has little right to look for eminence in glory, even though he should preach with as much power and acceptance, and in the midst of as many hardships, as St. Paul did.

You will hardly think, by my letter, that I am straitened for time at present, yet this, indeed, is the case; but I have dropped into a gossip with you insensibly. I am glad the Lord has visited you and comforted you of late. Think it not strange if such seasons are followed by temptations and darkness. St. Paul was in danger of being exalted above measure; and you know the means the Lord employed to preserve him. You are no better than he; and need not desire to be more graciously dealt with. His grace shall be sufficient for you. As to every thing else, submit yourself to him.

I am yours, &c.

LETTER V.

July 7, 1770.

My Dear Friend,

I received your piteous, doleful letter; I hope it is needless now to attempt to comfort you, and that this will find Satan cast out and the man restored to his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus. I pity you that you have so many conflicts; yet I rejoice with you, because I know the Lord intends you good by these tossings, and will thereby keep you humble and dependent. Is it not better to be sifted and shaken, than to be left to fall in such snares as some have been taken in, whom you have accounted better than yourself? But why are you so ready to throw down your shield, and to talk of running away from the battle? He that harrasses you while you hold the Gospel plough, would be presently with you if you were ploughing in the field. Nor can any change of circumstances put you out of his reach, unless you could tell how to run away from yourself.

It is said, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn." I am sure the Lord has not muzzled you: how is it then, that while you set forth a free salvation to others, you do not feed upon it yourself; but contradict your own preaching, and reason and complain, as though you had found out that the blood of Jesus Christ cannot cleanse from all sin; or, as though the Lord were as changeable as you are? I know you are a staunch Calvinist in your judgment, or I should think you an Arminian by some of your complaints.

When the enemy would tempt you to murmur about a provision, tell him that he knows (for he walks to and fro the earth) that, taking the kingdom round, there is not one minister of the Gospel in ten, so well provided for as you. And if so, you may ask him, if you have not much more cause for thankfulness than murmuring. What you have, the Lord has given you; and if he sees that is too little, he will moreover give you such and such things; 2 Sam. xii. 8. But then it must be in his way and time, and not in your own. How can you teach others to live a life of faith, except you learn, by daily experience, to live it yourself? And the life of faith is maintained, not by bags and coffers, but by pleading the promises in prayer, when we have nothing else to look to.

As to the success of your ministry, it is no part of your concern, further than to make it matter of prayer. Faithfulness and diligence is our part; the rest is the Lord's. I suppose you are quite as acceptable in B———— as Jeremiah was in Jerusalem; and probably see more to encourage you in your hearers, than he did in his. He was not very popular, but he was plain and honest;

and if not owned to save the souls of others, he delivered his own. And after all, the Lord did just as much by him as he purposed before he called him; and he did not a tittle more than he had purposed beforehand, by the preaching of St. Paul.

But it seems you think other people preach better than you. I hope you will always think so; if you should be mistaken, it is a fault on the right side. But other people think so too. I am not so sure of that; but if they do, it is perhaps to chastise you for your unbelieving fears. If you have a mind to outdo yourself, and to outdo us all, I will give you a receipt—*Believe.* The more you believe, the better you will preach. If the ministers they commend are faithful, simple preachers of the truth, depend upon it, the more your people like them, the more they will like *you.* I believe you are as free from a fear of being outshone by others as most men; but there is some of this leaven in all our hearts; let us watch and pray against it, and heartily wish and pray, that all who preach Jesus, may do it with more power and success than we can ourselves. We shall not be the poorer for their riches; but our Lord and theirs will take it well of us: and if he sees us simply content to take the lowest place, he will raise us up higher, for it is a standing law in his kingdom, that he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

I have touched on all your complaints, and brought myself to the end of my paper. Notwithstanding what I have written, I could fill a sheet with sorrowful stories in my turn; but "The Lord is good."

I am affectionately yours.

LETTER VI.

My Dear Friend,

I might defer answering your last till I see you; yet because I love you, I will write. I apprehend your mind is darkened with temptation, for your views of the Gospel, when you preach, are certainly clearer than your letter expresses. You may think you distinguish between evidences and conditions, but the heart is deceitful, and often beguiles our judgment, when we are judging concerning ourselves.

You say, "I hope it is my desire to cast myself upon the free promise in Jesus Christ; but this alone does not give assurance of my personal interest in his blood." I ask, Why not? Because you lean to conditions, and do not think yourself good enough. It appears to me, that if I cast myself upon his promise, and if his promise is true, I must undoubtedly be interested in his full re-

demption; for he has said, "Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." If you can find a case or circumstance which the words *in no wise* will not include, then you may despond.

It is certainly a delusion to imagine one's self of the number of Elect without scriptural evidence. But have you not that evidence? I think, as the saying is, you cannot see the wood for trees. You tell me what evidences you want, namely, spiritual experiences, inward holiness, earnest endeavours. All this I may allow in a right sense; but in judging on these grounds, it is common and easy in a dark hour to turn the Gospel into a covenant of works. But take it your own way. If a fear of being deceived, a mourning under a sense of vileness, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, a sense of the evil and danger of sin, a persuasion of the preciousness and suitableness of Christ in his offices, &c.; if these are not spiritual experiences, I know not what are. And will you dare deny that God has given you these? As to inward holiness, when we meet, you shall define, if you please, what you mean by it. The holiness of a sinner seems principally to consist in self-abasement, and in admiring views of Jesus as a complete Saviour—these are the main principles from whence every gracious fruit is derived. In proportion as we have these, we shall be humble, meek, patient, weaned from the world, and devoted to God. But if you will look for a holiness that shall leave no room for the workings of corruption and temptation, you look for what God has no where promised, and for what is utterly inconsistent with our present state. If you say, you must doubtless expect to feel evil in your heart, but that you are discouraged by feeling so much; I ask, further, if you can find, from the word of God, how much a holy person *may* feel? For my own part, I believe the most holy people feel the most evil. Indeed, when faith is strong and in exercise, sin will not much break out to the observation of others; but it cuts them out work enough within. Indeed, my friend, you will not be steadily comfortable till you learn to derive your comforts from a simple apprehension of the person, work, and offices of Christ. He is made unto us of God, not only righteousness, but sanctification also. One direct appropriating act of faith in him, will strengthen you more than all the earnest endeavours you speak of. Evidences, as you call them, are of use in their place; but the best evidence of faith is the shutting our eyes equally upon our defects and our graces, and looking directly to Jesus as clothed with authority and power to save to the very uttermost. So you preach to others—so you deal with exercised consciences; why not preach so to yourself? Will you point out a ground for their hopes upon which you are afraid to venture your own? Has He not kept you sound in the faith in wavering times? does he not preserve you unspotted from the

world? does he not enable and own you in your ministry? has he not often refreshed you with his consolations? Do you not tell others, that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin? Why then do you give way to doubts and fears? I would have you humbled before the Lord for your unworthiness. In this I wish I was more like you; but rejoice in Christ Jesus, and resist every temptation to doubt your interest in his love, as you would resist a temptation to adultery or murder. Plead the apostle's argument Rom. viii. 31—38, before the Lord and against Satan, and do not dishonour Christ so as to imagine he will disappoint the desire which no power but his could implant in your heart.

Yours in the best bonds, &c.

LETTER VII.

My Dear Friend,

I shall be glad to hear that you and Mrs. **** are in health, and that your souls prosper. Mine was dull and languid when with you, and has been too much so ever since. But I trust the Lord, the good Shepherd, will lead me safely through this wilderness, and bring me at last to see him in his kingdom. I am weary of living at such a distance, yet cannot quicken myself. Pray for me and mine, that we may be favoured with a season of refreshment. I have every thing else; but the want of more lively and abiding communion with him, makes my chariot wheels move heavily.

To him I owe my wealth and friends
And health, and safe abode;
Thanks to his name for meaner things,
But these are not my God.

I find vanity engraven, in capital letters, on myself and every thing around me; and, while encompassed with mercies, and so thoroughly satisfied with my outward condition that I could hardly wish a single circumstance altered, I feel emptiness, and groan, being burdened. If you think, by my writing in this strain, that I am very spiritual, you will be greatly mistaken. But I can say, I wish to be so.

My preaching seems, in some respects, contrary to my experience. The two points on which I most largely insist, are, the glories of the Redeemer, and the happiness of a life of communion with God. I can often find something to say on these subjects in the pulpit; but at some other times, my thoughts of Jesus are so

low, disjointed, and interrupted, that it seems as if I knew nothing of him but by the hearing of the ear. And answerable to this is the sensible communion I have with him. Alas! how faint, how unfrequent! I approach the throne of grace encumbered with a thousand distractions of thought, each of which seems to engage more of my attention than the business I have in hand.

To complete the riddle, I would add, that, notwithstanding all these complaints, which seem great enough to forbid my hope, to plunge me in despair, I have peace at bottom. I see, I know, I cannot deny, that he is all-sufficient; can, and does pity and help me, unworthy as I am; and though I seldom enjoy a glimpse of sunshine, yet I am not wholly in the dark. My heart is vile, and even my prayers are sin; I wish I could mourn more, but the Lord forbid I should sorrow as those that have no hope. He is able to save to the uttermost. His blood speaks louder than all my evils. My soul is very sick, but my physician is infallible. He never turns out any as incurable of whom he has once taken the charge. That would be equally to the dishonour of his skill and his compassion. Had he been willing I should perish, he would not have wrought a miracle (for I account it no less) to save me from sinking into the great deep, when he first put it in my heart to cry to him for mercy. And, O what astonishing goodness has followed me from that day to this! Help me to praise him; and may he help you to proclaim the glory of his salvation, and to rejoice in it yourself.

I am affectionately yours.

LETTER VIII.

December 6, 1772.

My Dear Sir,

I long for you to learn to distinguish between what are properly the effects of a nature miserably depraved, and which shows itself in the heart of every child of God, and the effects of Satan's immediate temptations. What you complain of are fiery darts, but you cannot be properly said to shoot them at yourself; they come from an enemy, and the shield of faith is given you, that you may quench them; why then are you so ready to throw it away? You seem to think yourself better at one time than at another; now I believe that we, as in and of ourselves, are always alike. Look at the sea; sometimes it rages and tosses its waves, at another time it is calm and smooth. But the nature of the sea is not changed; it is not grown more gentle in itself than

it was before; wait but till the next storm, and you will see it rage again as much as ever. Our unrenewed part is as untameable as the sea. When temptations are at a distance, or the Lord is present, it may lie quiet, but it is always deceitful, and desperately wicked. Or like a lion, which may be sometimes awake, sometimes asleep; but whether asleep or awake, it is a lion still, and a little matter will rouse it from its slumber, and set it roaring; though, while sleeping, it may seem as harmless as a cat.

If we could muse less upon ourselves, and meditate more upon the Lord Jesus, we should do better. He likewise is always the same: as near and as gracious in the storm as in the calm. Yea, he expresses a peculiar care of those who are tempted, tossed, and not comforted. Though you are sore thrust at that you may fall, He will be your stay. But I wish you could more readily rest upon his word, and rejoice in his righteousness, even in that only.

Believe me to be,

Sincerely and affectionately, yours.

LETTER IX.

October 22, 1773.

My Dear Friend,

If the lives of the two Henrys, and of other good men, were written by inspired men, you would not be so much discouraged at reading them. Depend upon it, they saw as much reason to be ashamed of themselves as we do. To us they appear in their better clothes, and we are told more of what the Lord wrought for them, than of the effects of indwelling sin under which they groaned. If I should outlive you, and I should have a call to write the life of the Rev. Mr. ****, of ———, I should perhaps find more to say in your favour than you are aware of; and if you would have the darker side known, as well as the brighter, you must write it yourself.

I am glad Mr. **** preached among you, there are some points on which we must exercise mutual forbearance. I have heard him speak sometimes as if he considered assurance to pertain to the essence of faith. Yet I do not think he would willingly discourage a weak believer. He is a frank, honest man, and I am persuaded would not have been offended, if you had hinted to him in conversation any thing in which you seemed to differ; and perhaps, were he to explain himself, the difference would not appear to be great.

I hope you are both well reconciled to the death of your child. Indeed, I cannot be sorry for the death of *infants*. How many storms do they escape! Nor can I doubt, in my private judgment, that they are included in the election of grace. Perhaps those who die in infancy are the exceeding great multitude of all people, nations, and languages mentioned, Rev. vii. 9. in distinction from the visible body of professing believers, who were marked in their foreheads, and openly known to be the Lord's. But I check myself, and would not indulge opinions about points not clearly and certainly revealed.

I am, sincerely,

Your affectionate friend and brother.

LETTER X.

June 24, 1774.

My Dear Friend,

I returned home in safety, under that invisible and gracious protection to which we are always equally indebted, whether at home or abroad, and which had preserved all in peace during my absence. Many, undoubtedly, who left their houses on the day I went to ———, will never return to them again alive; and probably many who left their families in peace, have found, or will find when they come back, that some unexpected calamity has quite prevented the pleasure they proposed in seeing their habitation again. To live as I have long done, from year to year exempted from the distresses with which the world is filled; to see so many falling and suffering around, yet I and mine preserved; sickness and death marching about and filling almost every house with groans, and yet not permitted to knock at our door; this is a mercy for which I am not sufficiently thankful. Indeed, ingratitude and insensibility towards the Lord, are evils which I may abhor myself for; and did I act in the like unfeeling, stupid spirit towards my fellow-creatures, they would soon be weary of me. But he is God and not man. I often call upon my heart, and charge it not to forget his benefits: but there is so much stone and lead in its composition, that I can make little impression upon it. Melt it, O Lord, with the fire of thy love!

Though I was very glad to see you and our friends at your house, I was not pleased with myself when there. Particularly, I was sorry I gave way to the discourse about Baptism, which, as we all seemed well persuaded in our own minds, was little better than idle talk. When tea was almost over, it occurred to me how

easily I might have turned it to a more profitable subject; but then it was too late. Methinks it did not require much study to find out that we were but poorly employed. Perhaps I may be wiser hereafter; but one word draws on another so strangely, that we are liable to be entangled before we are aware, for Mr. Self loves to speak last.

I thought of you yesterday. I hope you had a pleasant visit. I should have been glad to have been with you; I love that house. There seems to be no leisure in it to talk about persons or opinions. The inquiry there is concerning Jesus; how to love him more, and serve him better; how to derive from him, and render to him. If this is to be a Moravian, I do not wonder they are reproached and scorned. Where the spirit of the Gospel is, there the cross will be. But as I am acquainted only with two families, I cannot say how it is with the rest; but why should I not hope they are all in the same way; if they have notwithstanding, some little peculiarities, I apprehend very few of those societies which are ready to censure them, can exceed them in the real fruits of the Spirit.

I am your sincerely affectionate.

LETTER XI.

September —, 1774.

My Dear Friend,

Your judgment in the Gospel is sound; but there is a legal something in your experience, which perplexes you. You are capable of advising others; I wish you could apply more effectually what you preach to yourself, and distinguish in your own case between a cause of humiliation and a reason of distress. You cannot be too sensible of the inward and inbred evils you complain of; but you may be, yea, you are, improperly affected by them. You say you find it hard to believe it compatible with the divine purity to embrace or employ such a monster as yourself. You express not only a low opinion of yourself, which is right, but too low an opinion of the person, work, and promises of the Redeemer; which is certainly wrong. And it seems, too, that though the total, absolute depravity of human nature is a fundamental article in your creed, you do not experimentally take up that doctrine, in the length, and breadth, and depth of it, as it lies in the word of God. Or else, why are you continually disappointed and surprised that in and out of yourself you find nothing but evil? A man with two broken legs will hardly wonder that he is not able

to run, or even to stand. Your complaints seem to go upon the supposition, that though you have nothing good of your own, you ought to have; and most certainly you ought if you were under the law; but the Gospel is provided for the helpless and the worthless. You do not wonder that it is cold in winter, or dark at midnight. All depends upon the sun; just so the exercise of grace depends upon the Sun of Righteousness. When he withdraws, we find ourselves very bad indeed, but no worse in ourselves than the Scriptures declare us to be. If, indeed, the divine rectitude and purity accepts and employs you, it is not for your own sake, nor could it be, were you ten thousand times better than you are. You have not, you cannot have, any thing in the sight of God, but what you derive from the righteousness and atonement of Jesus. If you could keep Him more constantly in view, you would be more comfortable. He would be more honoured. Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. He sometimes offers to teach us humility; but though I wish to be humble, I desire not to learn in his school. His premises perhaps are true, That we are vile, wretched creatures:—but then he draws abominable conclusions from them; and would teach us that, therefore, we ought to question either the power, or the willingness, or the faithfulness of Christ. Indeed, though our complaints are good, so far as they spring from a dislike of sin; yet when we come to examine them closely, there is often so much self-will, self-righteousness, unbelief, pride and impatience, mingled with them, that they are little better than the worst evils we can complain of.

We join in love to you both. Let us pray that we may be enabled to follow the apostle's or rather the Lord's command by him, Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice. We have little to rejoice in ourselves, but we have right and reason to rejoice in Him.

I am, for his sake, sincerely yours.

LETTER XII.

February 11, 1777.

My Dear Friend,

The words, "for them," Isa. xxxv. 1. had better have been omitted, for they have no business with the text, and only perplex the sense. This is the judgment of the best commentators. But if retained, the best meaning is, that when the power of Edom is destroyed, the places which before were desolate and barren,

shall rejoice over them; to the destruction of the one, the glory of the other shall succeed.

The whole chapter is chiefly a pastoral description of the blessed change which the Gospel shall effect; as if a dry wilderness shall be changed into a well-watered and fruitful country. There is no need to seek a particular and express meaning of the words "reeds and rushes;" they only enliven the description and contrast. Dry sandy deserts (as in Africa) are the haunt or habitation of serpents or dragons. But such an alteration shall ensue, that instead of dry places, there shall be rivers and pools; water not merely to refresh the grass, but in great abundance, as in these places where reeds and rushes usually grow. What is often said of parables, that they do not go on all-fours, is true of many prophetical descriptions; there are circumstances which heighten the beauty of the painting; but if we attempt to deduce doctrines from every such circumstance, we rather enervate the Spirit of the passage, than explain it.

It must be allowed, likewise, that our translation, though in the main excellent and faithful, often misses the beauty and clearness of the original, owing sometimes to a servile dependence on the Masorite pointing, and sometimes to the translators not attending to the genius of the Hebrew poetical language, which is considerably different from the prose. "In the habitation of dragons, where each lay:" the word *each* makes the passage bald. "In the places where dragons lay, (or lurked,) shall be grass, &c." In the eighth verse, likewise, instead of "but it shall be for those," the original points out a glorious thought which is quite lost in the version, because it follows an improper division of the verse. Dr. Lowth's later version, which, when read, seems to speak for itself, is to this purpose: "The unclean shall not pass over it; but he shall walk with them in it, and the fool (or the weak) shall not err therein." This is the reason why no lion or unclean thing shall be there, and why the weakest of his people shall not be destroyed or wander; because he (their God and Saviour, verse 4,) shall walk with them, and be their guard and guide.

However, in public preaching, I meddle as little and as gently as possible with these differences. I sometimes intimate that the words will bear another sense; but I should be unwilling to make plain people suspect their bibles are not right. But there are innumerable places in the prophets which are capable of much clearer translation than what they have at present. Let me add one more, Isa, lxii. 5. Instead of "So shall thy sons marry thee," it should undoubtedly be, So shall thy Maker (or Creator) marry thee, agreeably to the following part of the verse.

Believe me to be affectionately yours.

LETTER XIII.

March 11, 1778.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HOPE Mrs. S****'s cold is better, and the children's complaints on the mending hand. What a many careful hours by day, and sleepless hours by night, have I escaped by not being a parent! It is well when they that have children, and they that have none, are alike pleased with the Lord's appointment.

I had no dread of the Fast-day; for whether overtures towards peace had been proposed or not by Lord N****, I should most certainly not have prayed for havock, but should, both in prayer and preaching, have expressed my desires and longings for a stop to the effusion of blood. But I fear we are not yet come to the crisis. The steps now taking would, humanly speaking, have done something awhile ago; but they are now too late, and, I think, will be rejected. But I know not the Lord's secret will. That I am sure will take place. As to outward appearances and the purposes of men, pro and con, I pay little regard to them. Indeed, they are no more stable than the clouds in a storm, which vary their shape every moment. It is enough for us that the Lord reigns, is carrying on his own cause, and will take care of his own people. The best, the only way in which we can serve the public, is by praying for it, and mourning for those sins which have given rise to these calamities. Alas! what signifies one day of humiliation in a year? When the day is over, every thing goes on just as it did before. The busy world, the gay world, and the religious world, are, I suppose, much the same since the fast as they were before it; buying and selling, eating and drinking, dancing and playing—and the professing sheep biting and tearing each other like wolves; or else like decoy-ducks, enticing one another into the world's snares. And though I find fault with others, I have enough to look upon at home. The Lord pardon them and me also! My heart is deceitful and wicked; my services poor and polluted, my sins very many, and greatly aggravated: so that I should be one of the last to be censorious. And yet I cannot help seeing that the profession of many is cold where it should be warm, and only warm in animosity and contention. The Lord help us! for we are in a woful case as a people.

I am sincerely yours.

LETTER XIV.

September 4, 1778.

My Dear Friend,

Welcome from K———. I hope you were the instrument of much good abroad, and brought home much comfort and peace in your own heart. How many are the seen and the unseen mercies we are favoured with in a long journey! And what mercy to find Mrs. S**** and your family well on your return, as I hope you did!

The same good Providence which has preserved you and yours, has taken care of me and mine. But Mrs. **** has been sometimes ill; no oftener and no more than we have been able to bear, or than the Lord saw was most for our advantage. After so many years' experience of his goodness, we surely have reason to be convinced that he does all things well. At present, she is tolerably well.

We are his sheep; he is our shepherd. If a sheep had reason, and were sensible of its own state, how weak to withstand the wolf, how prone in itself to wander, how utterly unable to provide for its own subsistence; it could have no comfort, unless it knew that it was under the care of a shepherd; and in proportion to the opinion it formed of the shepherd's watchfulness and sufficiency, such would be its confidence and peace. But if you could suppose the sheep had depravity likewise, then it would act as we often do; its reason would degenerate into vain reasoning, it would distrust the shepherd, and find fault with his management, It would burden itself with contrivances and cares; tremble under the thought of a hard winter, and never be easy unless it was surrounded with hay-stacks. It would study, from morning till night, where to hide itself out of the wolf's way. Poor, wise, silly sheep! if thou hadst not a shepherd, all thy schemes would be fruitless; when thou hast broken thy heart with care, thou art still as unable to preserve thyself as thou wast before; and if thou hast a good shepherd, they are all needless. Is it not sufficient that he careth for thee?

Thus I could preach to such a sheep as I have supposed; and thus I try to preach to my own heart. But though I know I cannot, by any study of mine, add a cubit or an inch to my stature, I am prone to puzzle myself about twenty things, which are equally out of my power and equally unnecessary, if the Lord be my shepherd. I am yours, &c.

LETTER XV.

November 4, 1778.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

MR. **** told me on Saturday, that when he left ———, you and two of your children were ill of the putrid sore throat: the next day he sent me word that you were better, but unable to preach. I have not had opportunity of writing since; but you have been often on my mind. I hope you will be able to inform me soon, that the Lord has caused his rainbow to appear in this dark cloud, and that you and Mrs. **** found him a present help in time of trouble. The disorder, I know, is very alarming, and the event fatal in many instances. It would have been no less so to you, if it had received commission to remove you by a quick passage out of the reach of sin and sorrow; but I hope your work is not yet done; and if not, I know the most dangerous disease cannot affect your life. Till the Lord's purposes by us and concerning us are fulfilled, we are in perfect safety, though on a field of battle, or surrounded by the pestilence. I trust you will be spared awhile longer to your family, friends, and people. Upon the same grounds, if either of your children should be removed, I shall not so directly ascribe it to the illness, as to the will of God; for if upon the whole, it be the most for his glory, and best for you, they likewise shall recover. Should he appoint otherwise, it must be best, because he does it; and a glance of the light of his countenance, the influence of that grace which he has promised shall be afforded according to our day, will enable you to resign them. I do not say it will cost you no pain, but in defiance of the feelings of flesh and blood, you will, I trust, hold nothing so dear that you have received from him as to be unwilling to return it into his hands when he is pleased to call for it. He will help you to remember that you owe him all; that your children are not properly your own. He lent them, and every creature comfort you enjoy, and has a right to resume them. We do not like to have any thing forced from us which is our own; but it would be dishonest in us to want to keep what we have only borrowed, if the right owner demands it. Further, the Lord is not only sovereign, but infinitely wise and good; and therefore it is our interest, as well as our duty, to acquiesce in his appointments. Should you be called to the trial, I wish you the same supports and the same submission as Mr. **** had when he parted with his little one lately; and as you have the same God, and the same promises, I hope you will. Thus much upon a supposition this should find you under the rod. But I shall be glad to

hear that the merciful Lord has healed both you and them, and that you are now feeling the meaning of Psalm ciii. 1—5.

Mrs. N**** has been favoured with a comfortable share of health since she was at Bedford! a little indisposed now and then, but slightly and soon better. The many attacks she has had the last two years, have rendered such considerations as I have offered to you familiar to my thoughts; sometimes I have felt the force of them, sometimes they all seem to fail me. For I can do nothing, or I can do all things; just as the Lord is or is not, present with me. In my judgment, however, I am satisfied that I have at all times great cause for thankfulness, and at no time any just reason to complain, for I am a sinner. Believe me to be

Your very affectionate friend and servant.

LETTER XVI.

November 18, 1778.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE observed that most of the advantages which Satan is recorded to have gained against the Lord's servants, have been after great and signal deliverances and favours; as in the cases of Noah, Lot, David, and Hezekiah. And I have found it so repeatedly in my own experience. How often, if my history were written by an inspired pen, might this proof of the depravity of my heart be inserted: "But John Newton rendered not again according to the benefits received; for his heart was lifted up." May it be far otherwise with you. May you come out of the furnace refined; and may it appear to yourself and all around you, that the Lord has done you good by your afflictions. Thus vile are our natures; to be capable of making the Lord such perverse returns as we often do! How should we blush if our earthly friends and benefactors could bring such charges of ingratitude against us, as he justly might. No; they could not bear a thousandth part; the dearest and kindest of them would have been weary of us, and cast us off long ago, had we behaved so to them. We may well say, Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardonest iniquity, and passest by the transgression of the remnant of thine heritage. It seems that the prophet selects the Lord's patience towards his own people, as the most astonishing of all his perfections, and that which eminently distinguishes him from all other beings. And, indeed, the sins of believers are attended with aggravations peculiar to themselves. The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were great sinners, but they did not sin against

light, and love, and experience. Pharaoh was proud, but he had not been humbled at the foot of the cross. Ahab killed Naboth for his vineyard, but not altogether so basely as David killed Uriah for his wife. I see many profligate sinners around me, but the Lord has not followed them with mercies, instructions, and pardons, as he has followed me. My outward life, through mercy, is not like theirs; but if the secrets of my heart were laid open, they who are favourable to me, would not think me much better than the worst of them. Especially at some times and seasons, since I first tasted that he was gracious. And yet he has borne with me, and is pleased to say, He will never leave me nor forsake me.

Well, when we have said all we can of the aboundings of sin in us, grace still more abounds in Jesus. We cannot be so evil as he is good. His power is a good match for our weakness; his riches for our poverty; his mercy for our misery. We are vile in ourselves, but we are complete in him. In ourselves we have cause to be abased, but in him we may rejoice. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ.

I am sincerely yours.

LETTER XVII.

December 29, 1780.

My Dear Friend,

So it seems I owed the letter, and charged the fault of not writing, to you. It must be so, because you say you are very certain it was so. Remember, however, I am writing last *now*. I hope when this comes, it will find you and yours comfortable, and your heart and mouth full of gratitude to Him who crowneth the year with his goodness. Well, these returning years each bear away a large portion of our time, and the last year cannot be far off. O that precious name which can enable a sinner to think of his last year and his last hour without dismay! What do we owe to him who has disarmed death of its sting and horrors, and shown us the land of light and immortality beyond the grave!

May he be with us in the new year. Yea, he has promised he will, even unto death. Therefore, though we know not what a day may bring forth, we need fear no evil; for he knows all, and will provide accordingly. O, what a relief is it, to be enabled to cast every care and burden upon him who careth for us! Though the night should be dark, the storm loud, and the billows high, the infallible Pilot will steer our barks safely through.

This has been an important year with me, it has introduced me into an entire new scene of service; and it has likewise seemed a

very short year. O, how the weeks have whirled round! It has not been without its trials; but comforts have much more abounded. With respect to my public work, I have been much favoured with liberty, peace, and acceptance. I hope it has not been wholly a lost year; though with respect to my part and share of it, I have reason to say, Enter not into judgment with thy servant.

Let us help each other with our prayers, that the little uncertain remainder of life may be filled up to the praise of our dear Lord; that we may be united to his will, conformed to his image, and devoted to his service. Thus we shall show forth his praise; if we aim to walk as he walked, and, by a sweet constraining sense of his love, are formed into an habitual imitation of his spirit and temper, in meekness, integrity, benevolence towards men; in humility, dependence, resignation, confidence, and gratitude towards him.

I pity such wise-headed Calvinists as you speak of. I am afraid there are no people more fully answer the character, and live in the spirit of the pharisees of old, than some professed loud sticklers for free grace. They are wise in their own eyes; their notions, which the pride of their hearts tells them are so bright and clear, serve them for a righteousness, and they trust in themselves and despise others. One modest, inquiring Arminian is worth a thousand such Calvinists, in my esteem. You will do well to preach quietly in your own way, not minding what others say while your own conscience testifies that you preach the truth. If you are travelling the right road, (to London, for instance,) though fifty people should meet you and say you are wrong, you, knowing you are right, need not mind them. But, alas! the spirit of self, which makes us unwilling to hear of contradiction, is not easily subdued.

I am yours.

LETTER XVIII.

March 29, 1781.

DEAR SIR,

IT is certain I did not wish to leave ————, and likewise that if the Lord had left me to choose my situation, London would have been almost the last place I should have chosen. But since it was the Lord's choice for me, I am reconciled and satisfied. He has, in this respect, given me another heart; for, now I am fixed here, I seem to prefer it. My sphere of service is extremely enlarged, and my sphere of usefulness likewise. And not being under any attachment to systems and parties, I am so far suited to

my situation. My hearers are made up of all sorts, and my connexions are of all sorts likewise; I mean of those who hold the head. My inclination and turn leads me chiefly to insist on those things in which all who are taught of God agree. And my endeavour is to persuade them to love one another, to bear with one another, to avoid disputes, and if they must strive, to let their strife and emulation be, who shall most express the life of the Son of God in their temper and conduct.

I preach my own sentiments plainly, but peaceably, and directly oppose no one. Accordingly, Churchmen and Dissenters, Calvinists and Armenians, Methodists and Moravians, now and then I believe, Papists and Quakers, sit quietly to hear me. I can readily adopt No Popery, for my motto; but Popery with me has a very extensive sense. I dislike it, whether it be on a throne, as at Rome, or upon a *bench*, or at a *board*, as sometimes in London. Whoever wants to confine me to follow his sentiments, whether as to doctrine or order, is so far a Papist. Whoever encourages me to read the Scriptures and to pray for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and then will let me follow the light the Lord gives me, without being angry with me because I cannot or will not see with his eyes, nor wear his shoes, is a consistent protestant. The depravity of human nature, the Deity of the Saviour, the influences of the Holy Spirit, a separation from the world, and a devotedness to God, these are principles which I deem fundamental. And though I would love and serve all mankind, I can have no religious union or communion with those who deny them. But whether a *surplice* or a *band* be the fittest distinction of a minister, whether he be best ordained by the *laying on*, or the holding up of hands; whether water-baptism should be administered by a spoonful or tub-ful, or in a river, in any river, or in Jordan, (as Constantine thought,) are to me points of no great importance. I will go further—though a man does not accord with my views of election, yet if he gives me good evidence that *he* is *effectually called of God*, he is my brother: though he seems afraid of the doctrine of final perseverance; yet if grace enables him to persevere, he is my brother still. If he loves Jesus, I will love him, whatever hard name he may be called by, and whatever incidental mistakes I may think he holds. His differing from me will not always prove him to be wrong, except I am infallible myself.

I praise the Lord for preserving you from harm when you fell; I have had such falls from horses, and received no hurt. When I dislocated my shoulder, I was at my own door, and in the greatest apparent safety. But we are only safe naturally or spiritually while the Lord holds us up.

I am yours, &c.

FOUR LETTERS

TO

MISS W****.

LETTER I.

March 3, 1772.

DEAR MISS,

YOUR obliging request to hear from me has not been forgotten; and if my leisure were equal to my inclination, I should write very often.

And now, what shall I say? May the Lord direct me to send you a profitable word. It rejoices my heart to think, that at a time of life when you might have been plunging into the vanities of the world, you are seeking Jesus. The Lord, who appointed the hour of your birth, and the bounds of your habitation, was pleased, in his good providence, to withdraw you early from the giddy circle of dissipation in which you might have lived, and to favour you with the advantages of example, instruction, and ordinances. You live at a distance from those ensnaring temptations by which the mind of young persons are blinded and stupified. Yet this alone would not have secured you. His providence has been subservient to his grace; otherwise, by this time, you would have been weary and impatient of restraint; you would have accounted the means of grace burthensome, and your home a prison. The evil of the heart is too deeply rooted to be overcome by any thing less than the power of God. Whatever your papa and mamma, or the ministers of the Gospel, could have told you concerning your state as a sinner, and your need of a Saviour, you would not have believed them, if the Lord himself had not borne witness in your heart to his own truths. You are now seeking him that you may find him, yet if he had not found you at first, you would never have sought him at all. This I mention for your encouragement, as a good reason why you may be assured that you shall not seek him in vain. I take it for granted, that though you are but a young soldier, you have already met with conflicts. There is a subtle enemy who labours to distress, hinder, and wound all who desire to serve the Lord. If you

could give up this purpose, and be content to make the world your portion, you would meet with no disturbance from him! if you were asleep, he would make no noise to awaken you. Those who are content with his service and wages, he manages with so much address, that though he leads them captives at his will, though he dwells and works in their hearts, though all the faculties of their mind and members of their body are under his influence, yet they are not at all aware of him; yea, when many in this state pretend to dispute his very existence, he does not attempt to undeceive them. Thus, while the strong one armed keeps his house, his goods are in peace; but when the stronger than he, the gracious Redeemer, comes to deliver the prey out of the hand of the mighty, and to release a soul from Satan's captivity, then the enemy begins to show himself as he is: and therefore I suppose by this time you can tell, in a measure, from your own experience, why he is called in the Scripture, an accuser, an adversary, serpent, a roaring lion; and what is meant by his wiles, devices, and fiery darts. He knows how to aggravate sin, to strengthen unbelief, to raise objections against the truth of the Gospel, or to work upon the imagination, and to fill us with dark, uncomfortable, wild, or wicked thoughts. But if he assaults you in any of these ways, you need not fear him; for he is a conquered and a chained enemy: Jesus has conquered him, he has broken his power, and taken away his dominions, so far as concerns those who flee for refuge to the hope of the Gospel. And Jesus holds him in a chain, and set limits to his rage and malice, beyond which he cannot pass. Nor should he be permitted to open his mouth against the peace of his people, but that the Lord intends, (for his greater confusion,) to make him an unwilling instrument of promoting their good. By these exercises they learn to prize his free salvation, and to depend upon his grace alone; for they find they are not able to stand against their enemy by their own strength. Therefore, fear him not; he who delivered Daniel from the lions will deliver you, make you more than conqueror by faith in his name, and at last bruise Satan under your feet.

I wonder how my thoughts have turned upon this subject. I am sure I did not intend it when I sat down to write, and if I had studied for one, I certainly should not have chosen this. If it should prove a word in season, I shall be glad. Perhaps it may; for though I know not the present state of your mind, it is known to the Lord, and I began my letter with a desire that he would direct me what to send you. However, if it does not so directly suit you now, it may perhaps hereafter, and in the mean time you may lend it to your mamma. She knows what temptations mean.

necessarily lie in my way. I believe most persons who are truly alive to God, sooner or later meet with some pinches in their experience which constrain them to flee to those doctrines for relief, which perhaps they had formerly dreaded, if not abhorred, because they knew not how to get over some harsh consequences they thought necessarily resulting from them, or because they were stumbled by the miscarriages of those who professed them. In this way I was made a Calvinist myself; and I am content to let the Lord take his own way, and his own time, with others.

I remember to have seen a letter from you to Mr. ****, but I can recollect nothing in particular of the subject: but I suppose if I had disliked it, or received any unfavourable impressions from it, some traces of it would have still remained in my memory. From what I have written above, and from the beginning of Omicron's ninth letter, (which was written in answer to one from Mr. ****,) I hope you will believe that I should be much more likely to blame his forwardness in giving the challenge, than your prudence in declining. I trust **** means well; but, as you say, *he is young*, and I know not but the kind reception he met with in Yorkshire might send him home with a greater idea of his own importance than he carried with him from hence. I suppose it was just about that time, when his spirit was a little raised, that he wrote to you. Young men often make mistakes of this kind. The Lord's blessing upon years, experience, and inward exercises, cures them of it by degrees, or at least in a degree; for, alas! the root of self lies deep, and is not easily eradicated.

We were very glad to hear that Mrs. S**** was likely to do well after her delivery. I hope, if the Lord spares the child to you, he will be numbered among the children of his grace. If he call him home by a short passage, he will escape a number of storms and troubles incident to human life. I know not how to regret the death of infants, especially under the dark apprehensions I have of the times. How do they appear to you? The prevalence of sin, and the contempt of the Gospel, in this long-favoured land, make me apprehensive that the present commotions are but the beginning of sorrows. Since we heard of the commencement of hostilities in America, we have had a prayer-meeting extraordinary, on a national account. It is held on Tuesday morning, weekly, at five o'clock, and is well attended. We are not politicians at ———; but we wish to be found among those described, Ezek. ix. 4. We pray for the restoration of peace, and a blessing upon our public councils.

I am your affectionate and obliged.

LETTER V.

September 3, 1776.

My Dear Sir,

If I were disposed to make you wait as long for my letter as I did for yours, you have taken an effectual method to prevent me. I have now daily a monitor at my elbow, saying, when will you write to Mr. **** ? If I answer, "before very long," the reply is, "Nay, it must be very soon, for he does not know whither to send the flowers, and it is high time he did." Thus I am likewise precluded from making any merit of writing so speedily, notwithstanding your long silence; for you may be ready to think, "I should not have heard from him these two months, if Mrs. **** had not wanted the flowers." However, to be even with you, I shall beg the favour of a letter from you a post or two before you send them, to prevent, (if necessary,) by a timely inquiry, such a sorrowful disappointment as we had last year. and I promise, in return, not to over-rate your punctuality in writing so soon, but to consider it as an occasional favour, which I must not often expect; but owing to the importance of the flowers, and your kind readiness to oblige her. *Sic vos non vobis.* So much for a business, in which for want of taste, I have no great personal interest myself. But let not this discourage you; for though a violet or a cowslip pleases me almost as much as any of the pompous or high-sounding words of the parterre, Mr. ****, Mrs. ****, and Mrs. ****, are sufficiently qualified to congratulate your skill and felicity as a florist.

After all, I acknowledge flowers have their value: they are very beautiful, and therefore pleasing; they are very transitory, and therefore instructive. All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower; the flower is more conspicuous and beautiful than the grass, but likewise more precarious and liable to fade. Ministers, some of them at least, have a beauty beyond the grass, the bulk of their hearers. They are adorned with gifts and advantages of knowledge and expression which distinguish them for a time; but the flower fadeth. How precarious are those distinctions for which some admire them, and for which they are in danger sometimes of admiring themselves! A fever, or a small change in the animal system, may deprive them, of their abilities; and while they remain, a thousand things may happen to prevent their exercise. Happy are those wise and faithful stewards, who know and approve their talents while afforded, who work while it is day, aware how soon, how suddenly, a night may overtake them. They may be hastily removed, cut down by the scythe of death; or, as the stalk remains after the flower is faded, they may outlive

their usefulness, and then the poet's words may be applied to the most accomplished instrument—

Stat Magni nominis umbra.

However, the true servants of the Lord have something that will not decay. Grace is of an abiding nature, and will remain when the gifts of knowledge and elocution are withered. We know not what changes we may live to see; but the love and promises, which are the pleasing subjects of our ministry, are unchangeable.

It gives me much pleasure that we are remembered by you and your friends; for then, I hope, you pray for us. We are likewise mindful of you. Though absent in body, I am often present with you in spirit. Saturday evening, in particular, is a time when, if I am not prevented, my mind travels round the land to visit the brethren, and I seldom miss taking H——— in my way.

The ignorance of the common people is indeed lamentable; we have affecting instances of it even here, where there has been no sound but the Gospel heard, from the pulpits of either church or meeting, for many years. You ask what I think the best method of removing it. I know no better, no other, than to go on praying, preaching, and waiting. When we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing, we have still encouragement to cast the net again. It must, it will be so, till the Lord opens the understanding, then light shines out of darkness in a moment. Should this ignorance be so far removed from the head, that people can form tolerable notions of the truths we preach, there is but little real advantage gained, unless the heart be changed by divine power. But the moment the heart is touched, they will begin to know to purpose. A woman who had heard me for years, went home one day, and expressed a pleasing surprise that I had entirely changed my manner of preaching. "Till now," said she, "I have often listened with attention, but could never make out any thing of his meaning! but this afternoon he preached so plainly, that I understood every word." The Lord had opened her heart so suddenly, and yet so gently, that at first she thought the change was not in herself, but in me. It is well that he is pleased so to work, that we should have no pretence for assuming any thing to ourselves. He lets us try and try again, to convince us that we can do nothing of ourselves; and then, often when we give up the case as desperate, he comes and does all.

Do not you feel something of 1 Sam. iv. 13. in this dark day? I am not a politician, much less an American; but I fear the Lord has a controversy with us. I cannot but tremble at the consequences of our present disputes, and lest the disappointment our

forces met with at Charlestown should be the prelude to some more important miscarriage. The plans of our operations may, for aught I know, be well laid, according to human wisdom, and our generals and admirals well qualified and supported to carry them into execution; but I am afraid the Lord God of Hosts is but little acknowledged or thought of in our councils, fleets, or armies. I see the nation, in general, hardened into that spirit of insensibility and blind security, which in all former ages and nations has been the token aad forerunner of judgment; and therefore I lay but little stress upon the wisdom of the wise, or the prowess of the valiant. I think if our sins were not ripe for visitation, the Lord would have prevented things from coming to the present extremities. I should have better hope, if I saw his own people duly impressed with the present awful appearances; but, alas! I fear that too many of the wise virgins are slumbering, if not asleep, at such a time as this! May the Lord pour out upon us a spirit of humiliation and prayer, that we may prevail, if possible, for our country; or if wrath be decreed, and there be no remedy, we may have our hearts kept in peace, and find him a sure sanctuary for ourselves. Two texts seem especially suited for our meditation, Luke xxi. 34—36. Rev. iii. 10.

I trust the Lord will reconcile you to his will, if he removes your sister. He is all-sufficient to make up every loss; and, indeed, it is wrong to grieve much for them who are called away from sin and sorrow to perfect and endless happiness.

I have had an excrescence growing on my thigh sixteen years; it is now threatening to get bigger, and therefore I expect soon to go to London to have it eradicated. It is not painful, and the surgeon tells me the operation will be neither difficult nor dangerous; only I must keep the house for some weeks till the wound be healed.

I am sincerely yours.

LETTER VI.

My Dear Sir,

If you think proper to furnish an article for the York Courant, you may inform the printer, that on Saturday, the 28th of September last, his present majesty, king George, (may he live for ever!) the duchess of Newcastle, lady Wheeler, prince William, and several other illustrious names, arrived at ———. They travelled in disguise, or, as we say, *incognito*; but it is thought and hoped, they will appear in their best robes before they leave the place; to which they already discover so strong an attachment, that they are, in a manner, rooted to it. You may further add, that the

same afternoon in ——— aforesaid, a comet and eclipse were both visible at the same time. I could enlarge in a marvellous strain, but perhaps this is a *quantum sufficit;* full as much at once as will gain credit in a newspaper.

Mrs. **** returns you thanks for your present and your care. And we both wish that what flourishes at H——— may flourish at Olney. What avails it for a flower, or a man or woman, to bear a good name, if degenerated from the characteristic excellences which the name imports? A tulip that has lost its colours, a shrivelled, deformed, irregular carnation, would not long preserve their places in your parterre; much less could you suffer weeds to rear their tawdry heads among your choice flowers.—But, alas! how is the Lord's garden, the professing church, overrun! Almost every lily grows among thorns or baleful plants, which convert all the nourishment they draw from the soil into poison. A time is coming when all that he hath not planted shall be rooted up. May we, as under-gardeners, be furnished with grace, wisdom, and diligence to detect, and, as much as possible, to check every root of bitterness that would spring up, both in the plantation at large, and in our own hearts.

I am, like your flowers, getting apace into an autumn state.—The Lord grant I may find the declension of vigour, which I must soon expect to feel, balanced by a ripeness in judgment and experience as you speak. If it be so with me, it is in a great measure hidden from me. To be sure, I have had more proofs of an evil nature and deceitful heart than I could possibly expect or conceive of twenty years ago; though I then thought I found as much of it as I could bear. I believe, likewise, my understanding is more enlightened into the three great mysteries of the person, love, and life of Jesus. Yet I seem to groan under darkness, coldness, and confusion, as much as ever. And I believe I must go out of the world with the same language upon my lips which I used when I first ventured to a throne of grace—Have mercy upon me, O Lord, a poor worthless sinner. My feelings are faint; my services feeble and defiled; my defects, mistakes, and omissions innumerable; my imaginations are wild as the clouds in a storm; yea, too often foul as a common sewer. What can I set against this mournful confession? Only this—that Christ hath died and is risen again; I believe he is able to save to the uttermost, and he hath said, "Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Upon his person, worth, and promise, rests all my hope; but this is a foundation able to bear the greatest weight.

I am your sincerely affectionate and obliged.

TWENTY-ONE LETTERS

TO

MISS ****.

LETTER I.

Olney, September 8, 1779.

My Dear Child,

I was glad of your letter, for we were just thinking of you, as it seems you were of us, that it was a long time since we heard from you. When you want a letter from me, you must write; if I send you one for one, I think it will be pretty well.

R**** died about a fortnight ago, and I buried him and three others within a week. All four were rather young people, that is, about thirty years of age. Last Sunday evening I preached a funeral sermon for Richard; the text was Gen. xlix. 19. That short verse contained his history; and I hope it contains yours likewise. The first part is sure to you if you live; you will meet with many troops, sins, fears, cares, and troubles, which will fight against you, and seem, at times, almost to overcome you; yea, overcome you they certainly would, if you were to fight them in your own strength. If you should not seek and love the Lord Jesus, you would be destroyed by them. But I cannot bear to entertain such a thought; surely you must, you will love him. You hear a great deal of his beauty and goodness; believe it, for it is true; and that a great deal is but little of what ought to be said of him. But pray him to show himself and his own love to your heart; then you will love him indeed; all the world would love him did they but rightly know him. Well, if you love the Lord Jesus, you will certainly overcome at last, and then you shall have the crown of life, and all the happiness which is contained in the promises made to them who overcome, in the second and third chapter of Revelations. My dear child, pray to him, and never be content or satisfied till you feel your desire and love fixed upon him. Nothing less will content me for you. If you should behave to me and your mamma with the greatest tenderness, affection, and attention, as you grow up, (as I hope you will, and you yourself are sensible you ought,) still I should weep over you, if I saw you negligent and ungrateful towards the Lord. We love you, and would do much to show it; but we could not, we dare

not be crucified for you. This was such love as only he could show; judge what a return it calls for from you. Not to love the Lord, is a disposition of the height of wickedness and the depth of misery. Believe me to be yours.

LETTER II.

Old Jewry, October 22, 1779.

My Dear Child,

You may well expect to hear from me; but you will hardly expect a long letter if you remember what little leisure I have in London. Almost every day loads me with debt, and brings me letters which I am not able to answer; but my dear Betsey must not be forgotten. We have been here a fortnight or upwards; the Lord gave us a pleasant and safe journey. Your mamma has been, upon the whole, comfortably well; and as you know we are at Dr. ****'s, I need not tell you that we are situated as much to our minds as can be, in the midst of so much noise and smoke. But here I can have no garden; no pretty walks amongst trees and fields; no birds but such as are prisoners in iron cages, so that I pity them for all their singing.

But the same sun that shines at N———, is often to be seen at London; and the Lord Jesus, like the sun, is in all places at once. Go where we will, we are not far from him, if we have but eyes to see him, and hearts to perceive him. My dear child, when you look at the sun, I wish it may lead your thoughts to him who made it, and who placed it in the firmament, not only to give us light, but to be the brightest, noblest emblem of himself; there is but one sun, and there needs not another; so there is but one Saviour, but he is complete and all-sufficient, the sun of righteousness, the fountain of life and comfort; his beams, wherever they reach, bring healing, strength, peace, and joy to the soul. Pray to him, my dear, to shine forth, and reveal himself to you. O, how different is he from all that you have ever seen with your bodily eyes! he is the sun of the soul, and he can make you as sensible of his presence as you are of the sunshine at noon-day; and when once you obtain a clear sight of him, a thousand little things, which have hitherto engaged your attention, will in a manner disappear.

As by the light of op'ning day,
The stars are all concealed;
So earthly beauties fade away,
When Jesus is reveal'd.

I entreat, I charge you, to ask him every day to show himself to

you. Think of him as being always with you; about your path by day, about your bed by night, nearer to you than any object you can see, though you see him not; whether you are sitting or walking, in company or alone. People often consider God as if he saw them from a great distance: but this is wrong; for though he be in heaven, the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; he is as much with us as with the angels; in him we live, and move, and have our being; as we live in the air which surrounds us, and is within us, so that it cannot be separated from us a moment. And whatever thoughts you can obtain of God from the Scripture, as great, holy, wise, and good, endeavour to apply them all to Jesus Christ, who once died upon the cross, for he is the true God, and eternal life, with whom you have to do; and though he be the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and rules over all; he is so condescending and compassionate, that he will hear and answer the prayer of a child. Seek him, and you shall find him; whatever else you seek, you may be disappointed, but he is never sought in vain.

Your very affectionate.

LETTER III.

Charles' Square, Hoxton, April 8, 1780.

My Dear Child,

I have heard of you several times since I received your letter, which I wished to answer before. I would be thankful that you are well, and I hope you are happy, that is, in the common sense of the word; for, strictly speaking, happiness is not to be found here. I hope, however, you are cheerful, thankful, and, in some degree, satisfied with your lot; and, in order to this, I would wish you to look around you, and see how many children are sick, while you are well; poor and destitute, while you are provided, not only with the necessaries, but the comforts of life. How many, again, are exposed to hard and unkind treatment, whereas you are noticed and caressed, and have kind friends abroad and at home. Once more, consider how many are brought up in ignorance and wickedness, have nothing but evil examples, and it is to be feared will go from bad to worse as they grow up; while you have the advantage of good education and good examples, and are placed where you can hear the precious Gospel, by which the Lord gives faith and salvation to them that seek him. Then ask yourself how it is, or why you are better off than they? And I hope there is something within you that will tell you, whatever

the reason may be, it is not because you are better in yourself, or deserve better things than others. Your heart is no better; you likewise are a sinner; you were born with a sinful disposition, and though you are a child, you have sinned against the Lord; so that had he been strict to mark what is amiss, he might justly have cut you off long ago. The reason why you are so favoured, must be the Lord's mercy and goodness. He pitied you when you did not know how to pity yourself; and in his providence he removed you from a place where you would probably have remained ignorant of Him, and he placed you under our care, and made you dear to us, that we might feel a pleasure in doing every thing in our power to promote your welfare. And I hope that you and we shall have reason to thank him that you came to us. The days are growing long, the summer is coming, and among the many pleasant days of summer, there is one which I hope will bring you home. I believe you will be glad to come, and we shall be glad to see you: I hope you will like the house. There are green trees in front, and a green field backwards, with cows feeding in it; so that it has some little resemblance of the country.

Your mamma desired Miss **** to send you a cake, which I hope you received; and if you did, I suppose it is all gone by this time: for they say, you cannot eat your cake and have it. It is a true saying, and full of meaning. Look at all that appears good and pleasant in this world; could you call it all your own, it would last but a little while, and then you go into another world, the remembrance of what you had in this, will be but like remembering you once had a cake, but it is gone, quite eaten up. But it is not so, my dear child, with respect to that feast which Jesus prepares for poor sinners. The pleasures which he gives are repeated from time to time, and are pleasing even when we reflect on them. And in the other world, when earthly pleasures will be quite ended, they that love him shall have pleasure without interruption and without end, rivers of pleasure at his right hand for evermore. The Lord bless you, and keep you. It is one of my pleasures while here to think of you, to feel for you, and write to you, as Your affectionate.

LETTER IV.

August 3, 1780.

MY DEAR CHILD,

YOU may be sure your mamma and I were very glad to hear that the Lord preserved you from harm, and that you were safe and well at N———. I wish you to have a deep impression on your mind, that your safety, whether abroad or at home, or the continuance of your health from one hour to another, is not a matter of course, but the effect of the care and goodness of Him who knows we are helpless as sheep, and condescends to act the part of a shepherd towards us. May you learn to acknowledge him in all your ways, to pray to him for his blessing, and to praise him daily for his mercies; and then you will do well. This is the great privilege which distinguishes us from the beasts of the field; they likewise owe their preservation to his providence: but then they are not capable of knowing him or thanking him. There are many young people who are contented to live without God in the world; but this is not only their sin, but their shame likewise. They thereby renounce the chief honour they are capable of, and degrade themselves to a level with the beasts. But let it not be so with you. Pray to the Lord to teach you to love him, and when you think of him, fix your thoughts upon Jesus Christ; upon him who conversed on earth as a man. The great God has manifested himself in a way suited to us, as weak creatures and poor sinners. God is every where present, but only those who look to him in Christ can attain to love, trust, or serve him aright. When you read our Saviour's discourses, recorded by the evangelists, attend as if you saw him with your own eyes, standing before you; and when you try to pray, assure yourself before you begin, that he is actually in the room with you, and that his ear is open to every word you say. This will make you serious, and it will likewise encourage you, when you consider that you are not speaking into the air, or to one who is a great way off; but to one who is very near you, to your best friend, who is both able and willing to give you every thing that is good for you.

Though you have not been gone from us a fortnight, we seem to long to see you again. August is come already; and December, which we hope will bring you here again, will be here before long. I shall be glad if you make the most of your time, and return so much improved, that we may be able to keep you at home; for it is no pleasure to us to have you at such a distance from us. But there is no suitable day-school in this neighbour-

hood, and if you must be at boarding-school, I believe you must be at N———; for, after you have been so long there, we should not be willing to take you from Mrs. ****'s school to put you to another; it would seem a slight to her; though our motive would be only to have you nearer to us, people would think we had other reasons.

My advice to you will be chiefly with respect to your religious concerns and your moral conduct. But there are other things belonging to your mamma's province. She wishes, as you grow up, you may not appear to a disadvantage when compared with other young women, and indeed, if you should be every thing she wishes you to be, you will do honour to the school you come from.

* * * * * * * *

I think you are in general willing to oblige her, and I am persuaded a little care and resolution on your part, would soon make it easy and familiar to you to follow the example she sets you, as well as the advice she gives you. I hope, therefore, for her sake, for mine, for the sake of your governess, and especially for your own sake, you will endeavour to be notable. It was a grief to me that my time was so unavoidably taken up, that I could spare but little to converse with you; but we agreed, you know, to make it up by letters. It is now your turn to write, and I shall be glad of a long letter from you soon, in which I wish you to open your mind, to tell me what you think, feel, hope, fear, or desire, with the same freedom as if you were writing to one of your school-fellows.

The Lord bless you, my dear child, and give you to increase in wisdom and grace, as you increase in years. Always think of me as Your very affectionate father.

LETTER V.

November 1, 1780.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I CONGRATULATE you that you are now within a month of December, when you will begin to count the days, and to see the vacation peeping over the head of a short interval. I may congratulate your mamma, and myself likewise, (provided you come to us improved as we wish you,) for we long to see you, and have done so every day since you left us.

Your mamma is often indisposed, but seldom very ill, at least not long together; but both she and I have many feelings with which we were not acquainted when we were young like you. The advantages of youth and health are seldom rightly known at the right time. It is, indeed, a mercy if, when we are growing old, we have some proper sense of the folly and vanity we indulged in early life, and can be ashamed as we ought, to think how many opportunities we neglected; how many talents we misimproved. Yet repentance cannot recall the day that is past. It is my frequent prayer that you may be wiser than I was at your time of life; that you may have grace to remember your Creator and Redeemer while you are yet young. Depend upon it, my dear, whenever you really know the Lord, you will be sorry you did not know him sooner; whenever you experience that pleasure which is only to be found in loving and serving him, you will wish you had loved and served him, (if possible,) from your very cradle.

I have no news to tell you; but one thing I can assure you, which though you have often heard, I hope the repetition will be always pleasing to you, I mean, that I am your very affectionate friend, and feel for you as if I was really and truly your father.

LETTER VI.

January 10, 1781.

My Dear Child,

I tell many of my friends abroad, that my time is so much taken up, they must not expect me to write to them; and yet I have offered to begin a new correspondence with you, though you are in the same house with me. I would have you take notice, and I believe you will, of this among many other circumstances by which as occasions offer, I take a pleasure in showing you that I dearly love you, and long to contribute every thing in my power to your improvement and to your satisfaction; and I persuade myself the hope I form of a suitable return of love and attention from you, will not be disappointed. The Lord in his good providence, gave you to me as a gift, and committed you to me as a trust; at the same time, he gave me a great love for you, and whatever we do for those we love, we do with pleasure.

I thank you for your letter of yesterday. It encourages me to hope that the gracious Saviour is knocking at the door of your heart. I doubt not but you write what you think and feel, yet there is more meaning in your expressions, than either you or I

can fully comprehend. You are, as you say, a sinner; a young sinner, and yet a great sinner. It is not your case alone, we are all born in sin; but to be sensible that you are a sinner, is a mercy afforded but to few children at your age. May the Lord keep the persuasion alive in your heart. But the word sinner includes so much, that a whole long life will hardly suffice to give you a full sense of it. Thus much I hope you know already, that a sinner needs a Saviour; and that Jesus is the Saviour of all sinners that seek him. I commend you to him; if he has taught you a little, he will teach you more. Put yourself simply into his hands, and wait patiently his time; he works powerfully, but for the most part gently and gradually. You know the sun does not break out upon us all at once in a dark night; there is first a glimmering dawn in the sky, which gives us notice that he is coming, and prepares us for his appearance. By degrees that faint light grows brighter; we see clearer and further; it becomes broad day, and after that the sun rises.

Your part is to pray to him, to hear his word, and to listen with attention when you hear it preached. I trust you will find your light increase, and your difficulties abate; I wish you to be as cheerful and easy as possible. Cheerfulness is no sin, nor is there any grace in a solemn cast of countenance. On the other hand, I would not have you light and giddy with levity; it will hurt your own spirit, and hinder you from the pursuit of what, in your serious moments, you most desire. I know your natural spirits are changeable; sometimes they are highly volatile: I would have you correct them by thinking you are a sinner. Sometimes you are grave enough; but if you feel uneasy, then try to think what a Saviour you read of. Be sure you do not indulge a hard thought of him, as though he were severe, and stern, and ready to take advantage of you. Form your ideas of him from the accounts the evangelists give you, that he was meek and lowly when upon earth, full of compassion and gentleness, ready to pity, to heal, to help, and to teach all who come to him; and they will tell you that he had, in particular, a great love for children. He tells you so himself. You read how he took them in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them. When you think of this, shake off gloomy thoughts, speak to him in your heart, and say, Lord bless me too.

One of the best methods of keeping free from uneasy, troublesome thoughts, at least of lessening them, is to be always employed; strive and pray against indolence, look upon it as a hurtful, yea, a sinful thing. Read in English and French, write and work. Your mamma and I will be both willing you should diversify these employments as may be most agreeable to your

own inclination; but we wish not to see you idle. Now is the time of life for you to acquire useful knowledge, that you may make yourself agreeable, and that you may be useful and qualified to fill up that station in the world which the Lord may allot you. I will gladly assist you, as much as I can, in what falls under my department; but you know I have but little time. God has given you a good capacity, and therefore the less assistance will be necessary, if you are not wanting to yourself. You may depend on our doing what we can to make you happy. If we seem to cross your wishes sometimes, or not to comply with your desire, you may be sure we have some reason for it. You shall go out with us, as often as we think it will be proper and right; and we shall not leave you at home for our own pleasure, but because it would not be good for you to be too much abroad. We expect and hope you will be ruled by a hint or a word; and then you will find us studious in contriving how to make every thing as agreable as possible to you. Because you desired a letter soon, I have written thus much, although I had other things to do, and it is preaching morning. I shall hope for a letter from you very much. The Lord bless you.

I am, my dear child,
Your affectionate father.

LETTER VII.

October 17, 1781.

My Dear Child,

I send you the first letter; in future you must not expect me to write but in answer to yours. We wish to hear soon that you are well, and that you like your situation. I do not wish you to like any place so well as home: upon one account you ought not; for it is impossible any persons should ever love you so well as your mamma and I do; and therefore you are bound to love us dearly, and that will make you love home; and the more you love home, the more diligent you will be in the improvement of your time at school. For your return to us must, in a great measure, depend upon yourself; it is no pleasure to us to send you abroad. I thought for a day or two the house looked awkward without you, and I miss you a little every day still; but we are forced to part with you for your own good. I cannot bear the thoughts of your growing up like a tall weed; I want you to appear like a pretty flower; and it is observable that the best of flowers in a garden would in time degenerate into tawdry weeds if

they were not cultivated; such is the importance of education to children. The Lord has been good to you: he has given you good understanding and natural abilities—and much that is engaging in your disposition. It would be a great pity that, with all these advantages, you should prove only a weed. To prevent it, I was obliged to transplant you from London to H———, where I hope you will thrive and flourish, increasing in wisdom and favour as you increase in stature.

I have written you many letters in a religious strain, which I hope you have preserved, and will now and then read them over, the more willing, perhaps, because your papa wrote them. I would not overdo you upon this subject; though the truth is, this is my chief desire for you, that you may know the Lord and love him; if not, though you were accomplished and admired beyond any of your age, and though you could live in all the splendour of a queen, I should weep over you; I should lament your birth, and the day when you first came under my care. But I know that I cannot make you truly religious, nor can you make yourself so. It is the Lord's work, and I am daily praying him to bless you indeed. But he has a time; till then, I hope you will wait upon him according to your light, in the use of his appointed means, that you will make conscience of praying to him, and reading his word, and hearing when you have opportunity. I hope he will enable you to behave obediently and affectionately to your governess, and in an obliging manner to all around you, so as to gain their love and esteem. I hope you will likewise carefully abstain from whatever you know to be wrong. Thus far I may hope you can go at present; but I do not wish you to affect more of religion in your appearance, than you are really conscious of. There is some danger of this in a family where a religious profession is befriended. Young people are apt to imitate those about them, and sometimes (which is abominable) to put on a show of religion in order to please, though their hearts have no concern in it. I have a good hope that the Lord will teach you, and guide you, and that the many prayers and praises I have offered on your behalf will not be lost.

When I began my letter, I did not mean to write half so gravely, I rather thought to find something to divert you; but you are very near my heart, and this makes me serious. I long to come and see you, but it cannot be yet, nor can I say when: but I shall bounce in upon you some day when perhaps you are not thinking of me.

I am, my dear,

Your very affectionate.

LETTER VIII.

November 10, 1781.

My Dear Child,

When your mamma and I come to see you, it must be on a Monday, for more reasons than one; which it is not necessary for you to know: and as there is but one Monday in a week, something or other may prevent oftener than I wish. However, I promise to think of you when I cannot see you, and sometimes we talk of you. "Christmas will soon be here; then we shall have her at home, and then who knows but she will be so improved, and behave so nicely, that we shall be sorry to part with her again." When we talk thus, I hope you will make good what we say.

Lately, for about a week, I was attacked by a company of pains. Some seized my face and teeth, some took possession of my back, and some got into my sides; but they are all gone now, and they did me no harm. You know little about pains and cares yet. You are now at the time of life when you are especially called upon to remember your Creator and Redeemer, and have the greatest advantages for doing it. But, if your life is spared, to you likewise the days will come when you will say, "I have no pleasure in them." But I hope, long before they come, you will have some experience of pleasures which do not at all depend upon youth or health, or any thing that this world can either give or take away. Seek the Lord, and you shall live; and you have not far to seek for him; he is very near you; he is all around you; about your bed by night, and your path by day. He sees, he notices all you say and do. But I do not wish you to conceive of him so as to make the thought of him uneasy to you. Think of him according to the account the evangelists give of him when he was upon earth; how gracious, compassionate and kind he was. If he were upon earth now, would you not wish that I should lead you to him, that he might lay his hands upon you and bless you, as he did the children which were brought to him? If he were here, and I could go with you and say, "Lord bless my child likewise!" I am sure he would not frown at you, and say, "Take her away, I will have nothing to do with her!" No, my dear child, he has promised, them that come to him he will in no wise cast out. Go to him yourself; though you cannot see him, it is sufficient that he sees and hears you. Tell him, that you hear and believe he is a Saviour to many, and beg him to be your Saviour too. Tell him it was not your own choice, but his providence, that removed you from C———, and put

you under my care which gave you an opportunity of knowing more of his goodness than you would otherwise have done; and beg of him to give you his grace, that the advantages you have had may not aggravate your sins, but lead you to his salvation; and do not let a day pass without thinking on his sufferings in Gethsemane and mount Golgotha. Surely his love to poor sinners, in bleeding and dying for them, will constrain you to love him again; and if once you love him, then every thing will be easy, and you will account it your greatest pleasure to please him.

I thank you for your letter. I conceive a hope from it, that you will improve in your writing. I wish you not only to write a good hand but a good letter; and the whole art is to write with freedom and ease. When you take your pen in hand, pop things down just as they come to your mind; just as you would speak of them without study. Tell me something about the fowls in the yard, or the trees in the garden, or what you please; only write freely. The Lord bless you, I love you dearly, and wish you to believe me to be Your affectionate.

LETTER IX.

My Dear Child,

Mrs. **** died on the Fast day, and was buried yesterday. I had often visited her during her illness, and was at her funeral. She was well a few months ago, but a consumption soon brought her down to the grave. But, though she was young, she was not sorry to leave such a poor world as this. I always found her happy and cheerful, though her illness was very painful. She suffered much by cold sweats; but she said, a few days before her death, that it would be worth lying a thousand years in a cold sweat, for one hour's such happiness as she then felt. "O!" she said, "if this be dying, what a pleasant thing dying is." I think my dear child has told me, that you are often terrified at the thoughts of death: now if you seek the Lord, as Mrs. **** did, while you are young, then whenever you come to die, you will find that death has nothing terrible in it to them that love the Lord Jesus Christ. He has disarmed death, and taken away its sting; and he has promised to meet people and receive them to himself, when they are about to leave this world, and every thing they loved in it behind them. You have the same advantages that Mrs. **** had; like her, you are placed under the care of those who wish well to your soul; the Scriptures, which made her wise to salvation, are put into your hand likewise, and you also have

the opportunity of hearing the Gospel. She was exhorted and encouraged from a child, to pray to the Lord for his grace; and so are you. I hope you will do as she did; and the Lord, who was gracious to her, will be gracious to you; for he has promised that none who seek him, shall seek him in vain. Your conscience tells you that you are a sinner, and that makes you afraid; but when the Lord gives you faith, you will see and understand, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; then you will love him; and when you love him, you will find it easy and pleasant to serve him; and then you will long to see him who died for you: and as it is impossible to see him in this world, you will be glad that you are not to stay here always; you will be willing to die, that you may be with him where he is. In the mean time, I hope you will pray to him and wait for his time to reveal himself to you; endeavouring to avoid whatever you know to be wrong and displeasing to him: and sometimes, I hope, you will feel your heart soft and tender, and serious thoughts and desires rising in your mind; when you do, then think, "Now is the Lord calling me!" and say as Samuel did, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." He does not call with an audible voice, but he speaks to the heart in a way not to be described by words. When we are grieved and ashamed for our own sins; when we are affected with what we read and hear of him, of his love, his sufferings, and his death; when we see and feel that nothing but his favour can make us happy; then we may be sure the Lord is near.

I believe you have too much sense and honesty to make a profession of religion, further than your heart is really engaged, in order to please your fellow creatures. But, on the other hand, I would not have you backward to open your mind to me on religious subjects. I know you are not without convictions, and though all convictions are not right, yet true religion always begins with convictions. We must know we are sick, before we can prize a physician. If I live to see you a partaker of the grace of God, one of the chief desires of my heart will be gratified; this would please me more than to have your weight in gold, and therefore you may be sure I often pray for you.

I am your affectionate.

LETTER X.

August 1, 1782.

My Dear Child,

Do not think we forget you; our love would reach you were you a hundred times further from us than Highgate is; but we are very much taken up. Monday your mamma was ill in bed all day; she is pretty well now, but P**** is very bad indeed —worse, I believe, than ever you saw her, and we can hardly attend to any thing but her. Then again poor Mr. B**** was hurt by a mad ox, about ten days since; his life has been in great danger, but we now hope he will recover. I visit him every day, and that takes up a good deal of my time.

I would be thankful that the Lord preserves you in health and safety. I hope you are thankful too. When you see any body sick, or hurt, or lame, I would have you think it is of the Lord's goodness their case is not yours. Sin has filled the world with sorrow; all the calamities you read or hear of, or see with your eyes are the fruits of sin; and as you are a sinner, you might suffer what others do, and it is only the Lord's mercy that preserves you, and provides you good things which many others have not. You know many children are brought up in poverty, meet with ill treatment have no parents or kind friends to take care of them. But though the Lord removed your parents before you were old enough to miss them, he took care to provide you a place with us; he inclined us not only to receive you, but to love you; and now your wants are all supplied: and besides this, you have been, and are instructed and prayed for every day. You have great reason to be thankful indeed, and I hope you will pray to the Lord to give you a thankful heart; for you cannot have it except he gives it you. That hymn in Dr. Watts' little book—

Whene'er I take my walks abroad, &c.

though it is written principally for children, will deserve your notice when you grow up and become a woman; I hope you will say from your heart—

Not more than others I deserve,
Yet God has given me more.

Oh, it is a great blessing to be sensible we deserve nothing from God but misery, and that all the good we receive is mercy, and then to know that all this mercy we owe to the Lord Jesus, who died for us that we might live and be happy.

There's ne'er a gift his hand bestows,
But cost his heart a groan.

When you understand this, you will love him, and then you will be happy indeed; then it will be your pleasure to please him; and then, putting your trust in him, you will be preserved from anxiety and evil. Your affectionate.

LETTER XI.

August 10, 1782.

My Dear Child,

"Vanity of vanities!" saith the preacher. "How vain are all things here below!" saith Dr. Watts;—and you and I, and your mamma, may say so likewise; for we all counted upon meeting last Sunday: we listened at the door, and peeped out of the window, but no Betsey came. When we heard by Miss **** that you were well, we were satisfied. Now we will venture to expect you next Sunday. Indeed, it is not amiss that you should now and then meet with a balk, that you may learn, if possible, not to count too much on what to-morrow may do for you; and that you may begin to feel the impossibility of being happy any further than your will is brought into submission to the will of God. In order to this, you must have your own will frequently crossed; and things do and will turn out, almost daily, in one way or other, contrary to our wishes and expectations. Then some people fret and fume, are angry and impatient; but others, who are in the Lord's school, and desirous of being taught by him, get good by these things, and sometimes find more pleasure in yielding to his appointment, though contrary to their own wills, than they would have done if all had happened just to their wish.

I wish my dear child to think much of the Lord's governing providence. It extends to the minutest concerns. He rules and manages all things; but in so secret a way, that most people think he does nothing, when in reality, he does all. He appointed the time of your coming into the world; and the day and hour of your coming from Highgate to us, depends upon him likewise: nor can you come in safety one step of the road without his protection and care over you. It may now seem a small matter to you and to me, whether you came home last Sunday, or are to come home next Sunday; but we know not what different consequences may depend upon the day: we know not what hidden

danger you might escape by staying at Highgate last Sunday The Lord knows all things; he foresees every possible consequence, and often what we call disappointments, are mercies from him to save us from harm.

If I could teach you a lesson which as yet I have but poorly learned myself, I would put you in a way that you should never be disappointed. This would be the case if you could always form a right judgment of this world, and all things in it. If you go to a blackberry bush to look for grapes, you must be disappointed; but then you must thank yourself, for you are big enough to know that grapes never grow upon brambles. So if you expect much pleasure here, you will not find it; but you ought not to say you are disappointed, because the scripture warned you beforehand to look for crosses, trials, and balks every day. If you expect such things, you will not be disappointed when they happen. I am your very affectionate.

LETTER XII.

October 15, 1782.

My Dear Child,

It is rather to your disadvantage that I have lately corrected a mistake I had made. I thought you were but twelve years old last birth-day; but I read in a blank leaf of the great Bible, that my child was born June 22, 1769; consequently you are now in your fourteenth year. Therefore, to keep pace with my ideas and wishes, you ought to be a whole year more advanced in improvements of every kind than you are, a whole year wiser. Some things which I might think very tolerable in my child, supposing she was but twelve years old, will seem but rather so so, when I know she is thirteen; and some things of another sort will be quite unsuitable at the age of thirteen, which might be more excusable if you were but twelve. You see, my dear child, you must stir your stumps, and use double diligence to fetch up this year, which we have somehow lost out of the account. You have a year less for improvement, and are a year nearer to the time in which you will begin to appear like a young woman, than I expected. I know not but I should have been pleased to find that I had made a mistake on the other side, and that you were younger than I had supposed you. As it is, I shall hope the best; I do not complain of you. As I love you dearly, so I have much comfort in you: and I trust you will pray to the Lord for yourself, as I do for you, that he may give you his grace, and wisdom, and bless-

ing; then I know you will do well. But sometimes when I consider what a world you are growing up into, and what snares and dangers young people are exposed to with little experience to help them, I have some painful feelings for you. The other day I was at Deptford, and saw a ship launched: she slipped easily into the water; the people on board shouted; the ship looked clean and gay, she was fresh painted and her colours flying. But I looked at her with a sort of pity:—"Poor ship," I thought, "you are now in port and in safety; but ere long you must go to sea. Who can tell what storms you may meet with hereafter, and to what hazards you may be exposed; how weather-beaten you may be before you return to port again, or whether you may return at all." Then my thoughts turned from the ship to my child. It seemed an emblem of your present state; you are now, as it were, in a safe harbour; but by and by you must launch out into the world, which may well be compared to a tempestuous sea. I could even now almost weep at the resemblance; but I take courage; my hopes are greater than my fears. I know there is an infallible Pilot, who has the winds and waves at his command. There is hardly a day passes in which I do not entreat him to take charge of you. Under his care I know you will be safe; he can guide you unhurt amidst the storms, and rocks, and dangers, by which you might otherwise suffer, and bring you at last to the haven of eternal rest. I hope you will seek him while you are young, and I am sure he will be the friend of them that seek him sincerely; then you will be happy, and I shall rejoice. Nothing will satisfy me but this; though I should live to see you settled to the greatest advantage in temporal matters, except you love him, and live in his fear and favour, you would appear to me quite miserable. I think it would go near to break my heart; for, next to your dear mamma, there is nothing so dear to me in this world as you. But the Lord gave you to me, and I have given you to him again, many and many a time upon my knees, and therefore I hope you must, and will, and shall, be his.

I hardly know any accomplishment I more wish you to attain, than a talent of writing free and easy letters; and I am ready to think, if you could freely open your mind to me, you might inform me of something I should be glad to know, or you might propose to me some things which now and then trouble your thoughts, and thereby give me an opportunity of attempting to relieve, encourage, or direct you. For these reasons I have requested of your governess to permit you now and then to seal up your letters to me or your mamma without showing them to her. I have asked this liberty for you, only when you write to us; nor even then always, but at such times as you find yourself dis-

posed to write more freely than you could do if your letters were to be seen before you send them. I have likewise told her, that I would desire you to be as careful in writing as if she was to see your letters, and not send us pot-hooks and hangers, as they say, because you know she will not inspect your writing. Under these restrictions she has promised to oblige me; and I take it as a favour; for I am well aware that, in general, it is by no means proper that young people at school should write letters from thence without the knowledge of their governess. But yours has so good an opinion of you and me, that she is willing to trust us, and I hope we shall neither of us make an improper use of her indulgence.

I am, with great tenderness,
My dear child,
Your very affectionate father.

LETTER XIII.

January 27, 1783.

My Dear Child,

Want of leisure, and not want of inclination, prevented my writing before you left home; and I now take the first opportunity that has offered since you went from us. If I had no more correspondents than you have, you would hear from me very often; nor can I expect to hear from you so often as I wish, because I consider you likewise have your engagements; and though, perhaps, I am not willing to allow that your business is so important as some of mine, it must, and ought, for the present, to take up a good deal of your time. You have not only reading, and writing, and arithmetic to mind, but you work sprigs, and flowers, and maps, and cut bits of paper to pieces, and learn a strange language, so that you are very busy to be sure; for idleness and sauntering are very great evils, and doors by which a thousand temptations and mischiefs may enter. Your mamma and I are well pleased with you, on the whole; your affection is not lost upon us; we think we can perceive an improvement in you, and we believe the things in which you yet fail proceed rather from inattention than from the want of a desire to please; and we have a good hope that, as you grow older, you will outgrow that heedlessness which you sometimes discover. You are not yet a woman, but neither are you a child; you are almost fourteen, and at that age a certain degree of thought and forecast may be hoped for, which it would have been unreasonable to expect from you

some few years ago. It has pleased God to give you a capacity for improvement; and, as you see we are so situated, that neither your mamma nor I can bestow that time and attention upon you, when you are at home, which we would wish, I hope you will make the best use you possibly can of the opportunities you have at school. It is no pleasure to us that you should live so much from us, for we love you dearly, and love your company; but it is what we submit to for your advantage.

You desired me to send you news, when I should write; but I have little to tell you. The public news you will hear, I suppose, from twenty people; it is very important. The Lord is about to give us the blessing of peace. Neither you nor I can tell the value of this blessing, because we have not known the want of it. It is true, we have heard much talk of war, and we have heard of the calamities which war has occasioned; but we have heard of them as things which have happened at a distance: had we lived in America, we should probably have seen and felt them. We should have seen towns villages, and houses in flames; have heard the groans of widows and orphans around us; have had every thing we call our own torn from us, and perhaps have been glad to hide ourselves in the woods, to save ourselves. Such has been the lot of thousands in the course of the war. If you remember the hurry, confusion, and terror which prevailed at the time of the riots, it may give you some apprehension of the case of those who live in a country which is the seat of war. Our apprehensions were over in a few days; but they live in such alarms, or greater, from the beginning to the end of the year. I hope, therefore, you will be thankful to God, if he is pleased to sheath the sword of war, and to put a stop to the devastations and the slaughters which have so long prevailed. Though you yourself have not been a sufferer, I wish you to cultivate a feeling and benevolent spirit, a disposition to compassionate, if you cannot relieve, the distresses of others. This, next to the grace of God, is the brightest ornament of human nature; or rather, when genuine, it is one of the best effects and proofs of grace. It was the mind of Jesus the Saviour; they who love him, will in a degree resemble him, and they only. A hard-hearted, unfeeling, selfish Christian, is a contradiction.

When you think what multitudes of mankind are suffering by war, famine, sickness, storms, earthquakes, and other calamities, let it lead your thoughts to the evil of sin, which brought all other evils into the world. But what is sin? I endeavoured to tell you last Sunday, from Jer. ii. 11. Sin is presuming to do our own will in opposition to the will of God, who is our Creator, Lawgiver, and Benefactor. By sin we affect independence of our Crea-

tor, affront the authority of our righteous Lawgiver, and are guilty of base and horrid ingratitude against our greatest and kindest Benefactor. If you could form a little creature and make it live, if it hated you and opposed you, slighted your kindness, and took a pleasure in displeasing you, would you not soon be weary of it, and, instead of feeding and taking care of it, be provoked to tread it under your feet? But, O the patience of God? though he could destroy rebellious men much more easily than you can kill a spider or a beetle, yet he waits to be gracious, and has so loved them as to send his own Son to die that they may live. Sin has not only filled the world with wo, but it was the cause of all the wo that Jesus endured. He groaned, and wept, and sweat blood, and died upon the cross, only because we had sinned. May I live to see you duly affected with the evil of sin, and the love of Jesus; and what more can I ask for you?

I am, my dear child,

Your most affectionate father.

LETTER XIV.

March 8, 1783.

My Dear Child,

It would please me if I could either visit you or write to you, or both, every week. But it cannot be; I am behind-hand with every body. Yet I think I send you six letters for one. You stare at that; but if you please to count the lines in one of your epistles, and the letters in every line, and then compare it with one of mine, you will find that you receive many more words and *letters* than you return.

You sometimes intimate that you are afraid of death; and I wonder not at it. For you are a sinner, but I hope to see you a believer, and then you will not greatly fear it, while it is at a distance; and whenever it comes very near, you will not fear it at all. Mr. **** is gone, and so is Mr. ****, and neither of them was more afraid of death than you would be afraid of a coach that should stop at the gate to take you home to us. Jesus died to make death safe and comfortable to us. Balaam was not a good man, but he spoke well when he said, "Let me die the death of the righteous." Make that prayer for yourself; it is a good one, though short. Entreat the Lord to number you amongst the righteous, that you may live their life; then your death will be like theirs. The Scripture, in many places, speaks of the righteous and the wicked, as two characters which divide and comprehend all mankind; and yet it tells us that there is none righteous,

no, not one—that is, there is none righteous by nature; sinners are made righteous by the grace of God. The grace of God teaches them to understand what they read of a Saviour, and of their own need of a Saviour. When they put their trust in him, their sins are forgiven them for his sake; and when they rightly consider his love to them, his dying for their sakes, they learn to love him, and they who love him, must and will hate what is evil; they learn to resemble him, and study to please him; and thus they are not only accepted as righteous in the beloved, but they are really made so; the love of righteousness is implanted in their hearts; they believe what the Lord says, they heartily strive to obey his commands, to avoid what he forbids; they place their happiness in his favour, and in doing his will. They cannot but speak of their Saviour, and what he has done for them; they love to hear others speak of him, and they love to hear those ministers who preach concerning him; but their religion does not all consist in talking and hearing; they are upright, gentle, and loving; they imitate Him who went about doing good. The evil tempers of self-will, impatience, pride, envy, anger, and malice, are put away; they cannot allow themselves in such things; if they feel the rising of such things in their hearts, they are grieved and ashamed, and are glad to fly to the throne of grace for mercy and help against them. On the other hand, they no longer seek pleasure in the vanities and follies of the world; they have better things to mind. These trifles they lay aside, as we forsake, when we grow up, the playthings which pleased us while we were children.

But you must not expect all this at once. Look at a great tree; an oak, for instance. How tall it is! how wide its branches spread! and if you were to dig, you would find it has deep and wide-spreading roots in proportion! Yet this great tree sprang from a little acorn; but not like a mushroom, in a single night: it has been years in growing, and had you watched it every day, you would hardly have perceived that it grew at all. May I not hope that there is at least a little seed of a gracious desire already put in your heart? If so, may the Lord, who alone could plant it, water it with his blessing, and cause it to increase; if not, it is my daily prayer that it may be so; and I hope it is your prayer for yourself. I pray that you may live and die with the righteous: it is said of them, They have hope in their death; and that when they see him approach, they shall say, "O death, where is thy sting!"

Your mamma and I love you dearly, and hope we shall always have reason to love you more and more.

I am your affectionate.

LETTER XV.

May 12, 1783.

I HAVE just now received my child's short and sweet letter; and having nothing to prevent me, I begin my answer to it immediately.

The snow does not often cover the ground in the neighbourhood of London so late as the 8th of May; but it has been so sometimes. One reason you were surprised at the sight is, because you are young, and this is the first instance, perhaps, in the few years you have been able to take notice. You will meet with many other things, as you grow up, which will surprise you for the like reason: for want of experience, you will not expect them. We expect flowers on the ground in May, and not snow: so those pleasures, the prospects of which present themselves to your mind, and appear at a distance as beautiful as we usually conceive a May morning to be, when we talk of it in winter, will not always answer expectation. When the time comes, something which you did not think of, unseasonable as snow in May, will come with it, and you will be surprised and disappointed; especially at first, and till you are used to these changes. By the time you are as old as I am now, you will not wonder so much; and I hope, long before that, the Lord will teach you to profit by such things. It is necessary we should find all to be uncertain and unsatisfying in the present world, or we should be contented with it, and not think of a better. One reason why young people are but seldom serious is, because the world appears so pleasing and so promising. They expect roses without thorns, and May without snow. The Lord make you wise by times, that you may remember and seek him *now* in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, (for come they will,) when you will find no pleasure in them.

Such days are come very early to Miss B****. I wish, if it were practicable, that all the misses in all the schools in London could see her. What are the pleasure and gaiety which the most are thinking of, now to her! shut up as she is, in the bloom of life, unable to move herself, and with pain her constant companion day and night! I have been much affected with looking at her; but I believe I shall not see her long. Within these three days she has been much worse. I was with her twice yesterday; and I have been with her again this morning. The doctors think she cannot live many days; and she thinks so too. I am glad to find that she is not unwilling to die. If her affliction has been sanctified to lead her heart to the Lord, then, instead of greatly

pitying her, we shall rejoice in her behalf. It is better to be sick or lame, or full of pain, and seeking after him than to live what is commonly deemed a happy life, without God in the world.

Cannot you contrive to put your lines in, a little closer together? Your paper looks like a half furnished room. I want a good long letter; I care not what it is about, so that you write easily. You read sometimes; cannot you find something in your books to tell me of? You walk sometimes, and without doubt look about you. Take notice of any thing that strikes your eye; make some reflection or observation upon it, and then put up your thoughts very safely in a corner of your memory, that you may send them to me the next time you write. I love a long letter, especially from you, because I love you a great deal.

Adieu, the Lord bless you, is the prayer of

Your affectionate.

LETTER XVI.

May 19, 1783.

My Dear Child,

If your sensibility drops a tear or two when you are informed that your aunt C**** is removed from this world of sin and sorrow, I have no objection; but I do not wish you to shed many, nor is there just cause for it. If we could see her now, she would surely say, "Weep not for me, I am happy!" Yes, she knew and loved the Lord; she lived in his faith and fear, and died in his peace and favour; and now she is before the throne. She had her share of trials in this life, but they are all over now: she fought the good fight, and the Lord made her more than conqueror. Now she has received the conqueror's crown, and is singing the conqueror's song. Methinks, dearly as I love you, I could bear to part with you likewise, if I was sure that the Lord had set his seal of love upon your heart, and thereby marked you for his own. If he has not done this already, I hope he will. If he has not yet taken full possession of your heart, I hope you are sensible that he is standing, as it were, at the door, and knocking, waiting to be gracious to you. The door of the heart is not easily opened. The love of sin, of self, and the world, are so many bolts, which are too strong for us to remove by our own power; yet he can open it easily, (because all things are easy to him,) and by a sweet constraint of love, force himself an entrance. I hope you are willing that he should do this; and that you are not willing to do any thing on your part that may

grieve him and cause him to withdraw and leave you to yourself. You cannot do much: you can, indeed, do nothing spiritually of yourself. Yet there is something for you to do; you are to wait, and pray, and long for his blessing; you are to read his word, and to endeavour to make it the rule of your conduct, so far as you understand it; you are to attend to his voice in your conscience, and not wilfully allow yourself in what you know to be wrong. This is the path in which my heart's desire and prayer is that you may walk at present; and then in due time the promise shall be fulfilled to you, which says, "Then shall you know, if you follow on to know the Lord:" Hosea, 3. vi.

You may believe we had some weeping at home upon this occasion. But the Lord is very good. Your mamma has been supported, and is pretty well.

I long to see you, and especially now, that we may read Mr. Gray's Elegy together. I hope we shall be permitted to be with you on the famous exhibition-day; and I please myself with the thought, that you will appear to advantage. I wish, for your own sake, you could get the better of that trepidation and hurry which discomposes you when the eyes of company are upon you; but it is a fault on the right side, and much better than a bold, pert, self-confident carriage, which is very disgusting in some young people; but there is a medium which I wish you to aim at.

I am your affectionate.

LETTER XVII.

June 11, 1783.

My Dear Child,

I thank you for your last letter, which pleased me and your mamma very much. We thought it well written, and well expressed. Take as much care as you please how you write, and use as little study as you please, what to write. When you are surrounded with the beauties of nature, you need not puzzle yourself with thinking what to say first; but set down first what first occurs to your mind: when you have written that, something else will offer. Try to write just what you think, and write as often and as largely as your many important businesses will allow; for nothing but practice will give you a habit of writing easily: and practice will do it. We could fill up as large a sheet as you, with repeating how much we love you; I hope and believe there is no love lost on either side. Love will make you desirous to please and oblige us, and love will prompt us to do every thing

in our power to oblige and please you; and so I hope we shall go on loving and pleasing as long as we live.

We often think of Monday se'nnight, when we hope to come and see your exhibition. I promise myself that your part will do you credit, and give us satisfaction. I could like to come over and read the Elegy with you once more; but I know I shall not be able, and I believe it will not be necessary. I doubt not but you will do it very well, especially if you can get the better of your diffidence and trepidation. But I had much rather see you a little timid, than see you assuming and affected, as some young people are. I could wish you to have just so much feeling when you begin, as might intimate a respect for the company; and then that you should enter into the spirit of the poem, so as, in a manner, to forget every body present, till you have done. There is a great beauty in the cadence and melody of the verse, if you can hit it off without overdoing it. If you understand and can feel the subject, you will express it properly.

I hope the Elegy will likewise lead you to some profitable reflections for your own use, and which may excite your thankfulness to the Lord. To him you owe your capacity, and to him, likewise, you are indebted for the advantages you have of cultivation. It is possible, that among the children we meet half naked in the streets, there may be some who might have been amiable and admired in life, if they had been favoured with the helps which the good providence of God has afforded you. But they grew up, poor things, in ignorance and wickedness, after the example of those among whom they live. And though you would not have been like these, yet it is probable you would not have been, as you now may, and I hope will be, if the Lord had not sent you to us. Though you were deprived of your own parents when you were very young, perhaps no child, in such a case, has had less cause to feel the loss; because the Lord not only made us willing to take care of you, but gave us, immediately on our receiving you, a tender affection for you, as if you had been our own; and from that time your welfare has been a very principal object with us. You have been guarded against the follies and vanities which might otherwise have taken an early possession of your mind; and you have been acquainted with the means of grace, and the blessed Gospel. I trust the Lord has a gracious design to lead you to himself, by all these favourable circumstances in which he has placed you; for, without this every thing you can learn or attain would be but of little worth. I wish, indeed, to see you possessed of every accomplishment you can acquire at school; but nothing will satisfy me for you but the grace of God. I am your very affectionate.

LETTER XVIII.

July 29, 1783.

My Dear Great Girl,

You seem to take it for granted that I must always write first; and you see I very readily submit, in hope that when your great and many important businesses will permit, you will at least oblige me with an answer; for it will give your mamma and me, and your cousin, pleasure to know that you are well.

While you were a little girl, we used, when you came home from N———, to place you with your back against the wall, by the fire-place in the parlour, and compare you with your former marks, that we might notice how much taller you grew from one half year to another. According to present appearances, you are likely to be sufficiently tall, and to shoot up apace. I need not measure, for I can perceive, by a glance of the eye, that you are grown every time you return to us. But I am watching your growth in another sense with more attention—I wish I could say with more satisfaction. I wish to see you outgrow a certain childishness, which once looked very pretty in you, but is by no means so pleasing in a person of your years, and of your size; I think I may add of your sense too, for I know the Lord has given you a good measure of understanding and natural abilities; so that with a proper degree of attention and application, you are very capable of every attainment suitable to your sex and your situation in life. I love to call you my dear child, and shall probably call you so as long as I live, because there is something to me in the sound of the word *child*, expressive of the tenderness and affection I feel for you; but I would not always have you a child in the common sense of the word. I hope you will not think I am angry with you, and I hope you will not be angry with me for giving you this hint. I love to see you cheerful, and a little occasional volatility in a young person favoured with health and full of spirits, is very tolerable; but then I would have you remember, that it is high time that a measure of thought, and steadiness, and attention, should begin to mark your general deportment. Your dear mamma, at your age, was capable of superintending the affairs of the family, and was actually called to it; and you are now old enough, if you will do yourself justice, to take a great deal of care off from her hands when you are at home; you have it in your own power to shorten the term of your living away from us. I am glad that though you like your school very well, yet you like home better; and I am sure we shall be glad when we can think it no longer necessary to keep you abroad,

for we love your company, and it is principally for your own sake that we are constrained to part with you. But, they say, a word to the wise is enough, and therefore I shall add no more in this strain.

You heard several of my sermons on Mary and Martha. Last Sunday night, I finished the subject by speaking on "One thing is needful"—a sentence which I pray the Lord to write upon your heart. Many things are necessary in their places; but one thing is absolutely needful. It is right that you should be diligent at school, obedient and obliging to your governess and teachers, and endeavour, by a kind and gentle behaviour, to gain the esteem of your school-fellows, and of the whole family; a regard to the one thing needful is very consistent with all this. But though you were beloved by every body that knows you, you cannot be happy except you know and love the Lord. The one thing needful, therefore, is to seek him, and his favour, which is better than life; and if you seek him, he will be found of you. You are a sinner, and need forgiveness; you have many wants, which he only can supply; you are growing up in a world which is full of sins, snares, troubles and dangers. Will you not cry to him, then, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth!" You have encouragement to seek him, for he himself both invites and commands you to do it; and if obligations and gratitude can prevail, there is no friend like him, whose mercies are new every morning, and who died upon the cross to redeem us from misery. I commend you to his blessing.

Your cousin is much as she was; she sends her love to you. I believe she loves you dearly, and I believe you love her. I hope you will both love each other as long as you live upon this earth; and that afterwards you will meet in the kingdom of love, and be happy together in heaven for ever. Mamma sends her best love. Believe me to be often thinking of you, and praying for you, and always desirous to show my love in deed and in truth.

Your affectionate.

LETTER XIX.

October 16, 1783.

My Dear Child,

I hope you will now be able to rest yourself: for you have had a sad hurrying time since Midsummer. So much visiting and running about has, I hope, given you a ripe relish for the retirement and regularity of school. What a pretty place you are in, and

what a pretty time of life it is with you, if you can but think so, before trouble and care have received commission to disturb you.

I could wish that all my letters might afford you both pleasure and profit: I would make you smile sometimes, and always endeavour to do you good. At present I must write a little upon the subject of temper. I do not think your temper a bad one. You mamma and I are always ready to give you a good character, and it pleases us that we can say you are, in the main, affectionate and obliging. But we sometimes observe that in you, which we could wish nobody took notice of but ourselves; or rather, that you would strive to get quite the better of it, that we, who love you so dearly, might be no more grieved. It is a certain self-willed impatience, which disposes you, when your inclinations are over-ruled, or when any thing is desired of you which does not exactly please you, to pout, frown, and alter your countenance, so that you often appear to a disadvantage in company. You do not seem to find, or to think of finding, a pleasure in giving up any thing, to please your mamma, but had rather have your own way. Now, if you sit down and consider how much we love you, and study to oblige and please you, I hope you will strive against this humoursome temper. I call it so, because I do not believe it is owing to a want of affection and gratitude on your part, but rather the effect of a something in your natural temper, which, if you strive against, I hope you will be enabled to overcome.

Besides what you owe to our love and tenderness, I can give you a further reason why you should attend to this point. I have told you repeatedly, and I tell you again, that your cousin's coming to live with us will not make the slightest alteration in our love for you. You are still, and will be, our own dear child; we have love enough for you both. But, in the outward expression of our love, something must, of course, depend upon behaviour. We are sometimes obliged, though with reluctance, to reprove and contradict you; now, we cannot reprove her, because she never gives us an opportunity. In the seven months she has been with us, I never once knew her debate with us, nor have I once seen a cloud upon her brow for a single moment. She watches our looks, and if she perceives the slightest hint that any thing she proposes is not quite agreeable to us, she has done with it in a moment, and gives it up with a smile; which shows that it costs her nothing, but that she really prefers pleasing us to the pleasing herself. Now you must allow, my dear, that this behaviour is very engaging. I wish you to be equally engaging, and not to seem to come short of her in any thing.

Have you heard of your good friend Mrs. ****'s illness? They have no expectation of her recovery; nay, perhaps she is dead before this time. How well she seemed when we dined there but lately! So uncertain is life—even young people have no assurance of continuing here; but I hope you will pray as David did, Psa. xxxix. 4, and that the Lord will hear your prayer. When you come to know him as your Lord and Saviour, you may sing Simeon's song. And we cannot enjoy life with true comfort, till we are delivered from the fear of death. I am your affectionate.

LETTER XX.

October 23, 1783.

My Dear Child,

When I showed my last letter to your mamma, I thought she looked as if she was almost unwilling I should send it; but she did not say so, and therefore it went. She is unwilling to give you pain, and so am I. But I persuaded myself you would take it (as I meant it) as a proof of my love. Now and then I must gently give you a word of advice, but it will always be much more pleasing to me to commend than to find fault. Your welfare is very near my heart, and I feel a warm desire that your behaviour, in every respect, should be such as to engage the esteem and affection of all who know you. I remember, when you were a little girl at Northampton school, I once told you, in a letter, that when the Lord, in his providence, sent you to my care, I received you as his gift; and in the pleasing hope of being an instrument in his hand of doing you good, I found such affection for you, that I would not part with you for your weight in gold. And though you are much heavier now than you were then, I can say the same still.

Mrs. W**** had been ill some days before I heard of it, and then I was told she was at the point of death. This information, with some hindrances and difficulties in the way, prevented my going to ———; so that I did not see her. She was an old and kind acquaintance, and though of late years I was not often in her company, I feel that I have lost a friend whom I loved. Such is the state of this world. If we live long in it, we must expect to see our friends drop off, one after another, as the leaves at this season of the year fall from the trees. But the pain which Christians feel at parting with their Christian friends, is alleviated by two considerations: first, that now they are gone, they are much more happy than they could be here; and secondly, we hope ere long to be

with them again, and to share in their songs and joys before the throne of God. This, my dear child, is the desire of my soul for you, that while you live, and when you die, you may be the Lord's. Nothing but this will satisfy me. And for this I often pray. My thoughts and prayers are often employed for you, when perhaps you are asleep. I cannot make many very particular requests for you, because I know not what is best for you; but when I pray that you may have wisdom and grace to seek and know the Lord, and that he will be graciously pleased to be your Saviour and Shepherd, and the guide of your youth, I am sure I do not ask amiss. I have a cheerful hope that he will put you among his children, guide you through this wilderness world by his counsel, and afterwards receive you to his glory; and that he sent you to me, that you might have the benefit of those means of grace and instructions, which, by his blessing, will be effectual to make you wise unto salvation.

Though he alone can work in you to will, and to do according to his good pleasure, yet there is something incumbent on you. He has said, "They who seek me, shall find me." You must therefore seek him; and he is not far from you. He is about your bed, and about your path. Yea, he is still nearer. I hope there are seasons when you can perceive him knocking, as it were, at the door of your heart. Do not you at times perceive something within you bearing witness to the truths of his word; warning you of the evil of sin, reminding you of death and eternity, and stirring up your desires towards himself? At such times you may be sure the Lord is near. He made the heart, and he knows how to affect it. Such warnings and calls from his Good Spirit, I can recollect when I was a child younger than you; I can remember getting into corners by myself, and praying with some earnestness, before I was eight years old. Afterwards, alas! I proved rebellious. I cast off his fear, and would have my own way; and thereby I plunged myself into abundance of sin and misery. But I hope you will be more obedient. Think of him as often as you can; make a point of praying to him in secret, remembering that when you are most alone, he is still with you. When you pray, endeavour simply to express your wants and feelings just as if you were speaking to me. Fine words and phrases, some people abound in; but true prayer is the genuine language of the heart, which the Lord understands and accepts, however brokenly expressed. The woman of Canaan only said, "Lord help me!" The publican's prayer was almost as short, "God be merciful to me a sinner:" and both were heard.

The Bible, or the New Testament, is frequently used at school, as a school-book; and children often think no more of it than just to read their appointed lesson. But I hope you will consider it as

God's book, and when you take it in hand, open it with reverence, and read with attention, as you think you would if you expected to hear him speak to you with an audible voice from heaven. The plainest and most affecting part of the Bible is the history of our Saviour in the evangelists; read it often, that you may be well acquainted with it. I pray him to enable you to understand what you read. Surely, when you read who he is, what he did, what he suffered, and what he has promised to poor sinners, you will, you must, love him! And if you once love him, you will study to please him. The Lord bless you. Give our love to your governess, and all friends. Believe me to be your very affectionate.

LETTER XXI.

October 30, 1783.

My Dear Child,

Though I lately sent you a long letter by the post, which I hope you received on Tuesday, I must write again; and I take a new pen, and a sheet of gilt paper, that I may, in the best manner I can, make you a return for your letter which I received yesterday. I would not delay long to let you know how much your mamma and I were pleased with it. It is a great happiness to us that we are well assured of your desire and intention to oblige us; and we hope not to be behindhand with you.

We are very far from thinking your temper is bad; the manner of your answer is a proof of the contrary. You may sometimes need a word of advice or admonition; I believe even this will not be often necessary; and when there is occasion, my affection will prompt me to offer it with so much tenderness, that it shall look as little like reproof as possible; and I hope and expect to find many more occasions for commending than for reproving you.

Should it please the Lord to spare your cousin, a time will come when you will live together, and, I believe, love each other dearly. I would certainly wish you to imitate her in any thing that you see is commendable; and there will be other things, I trust, in which you may be a pattern to her. Thus you may be mutually useful to each other; and we will love you both, and rejoice in you both. We shall not love you a hair's breadth the less than we should have done if we had never seen her.

Indeed, I cannot be sufficiently thankful to the Lord, that when he was pleased, in his providence, to put two children under my care, they should be both of such an amiable, affectionate disposition, as would win my love if they had been strangers, and not so nearly related as you and your cousin are to us. And though I con-

sider you both now as my own children, yet you are still my eldest, and my having a second will be no prejudice to your birthright.

I have not a bit of News that I can think of to send you. Your mamma is pretty well, and your cousin likewise; but she is much confined, for if the weather is either wet or cold, we cannot venture her abroad. She does not seem to want to go out, except to church. When we are going thither, it is some trial to her to be left behind; but she is satisfied, because she thinks her aunt is the most proper judge whether she can go with safety or not.

You, my dear, are favoured with health, and I hope you will be thankful for it. Your cousin, and twenty other young people I could name, know the value of health by the want of it. The Lord can make sickness a blessing when he is pleased to send it; but still a good state of health is a great privilege. If your life should be prolonged, it may be a good while before increase of years makes a sensible change in your constitution, but you will feel it at last. When you see an old woman tottering about with a stick, consider that she was once as young as you are now, and probably her spirits as lively, and her limbs as agile as yours. Suppose it may be fifty years before you are like her, such a space, which seems long beforehand, will seem very short when it is past; and there is hardly one in fifty of your age, that will be alive fifty years hence.

Dangers stand thick through all the ground,
To push us to our tomb;
And fierce diseases wait around,
To hurry mortals home.

How just, therefore, and important is that advice, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come!"

And whom should we remember if we forget him? Our Creator is our Redeemer; Isa. liv. 5; the Saviour, the Lover of Souls, who assumed our nature, that he might be capable of dying for us. Shall we not remember him who endured agonies, and sweat blood, and hung upon the cross, that we might escape the misery we have deserved, and be made the children of God! I wish the poet's words may express the very feeling of your heart and mine:—

Remember thee!—
Yes, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
That youth and observation copied there;
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmix'd with baser matter.

I commend you to his love, and pray him to write his name upon your heart. We all join in love to you.

Believe me to be your affectionate.

FIVE LETTERS

TO

MR. AND MISS M**** B****.

FIVE LETTERS

TO

MR. AND MISS M**** B****.

LETTER I.

TO MR. B****.

May 1, 1780.

My Dear Sir,

I blame myself, and ask your pardon, for not writing sooner. My confinement occasioned me so many visits from kind friends, that it added little to my usual time of leisure. Your first letter, enclosing Mr. C****'s, came safe; as did the second, but that was posterior to mine to Miss P****, and therefore I could not then acknowledge it. I now thank you for them both, and for that dated the 27th of April. As the news of your illness and your amendment came together, my sympathy was concern mixed with pleasure; and having as much that seemed to require immediate attention as I could well find time for, I believe the hope of seeing you soon in town, made me the more easy to let your letter lie by unanswered.

My arm, I believe, is nearly, if not quite well, excepting a stiffness in it, from being so long confined in one position. I have it now as much out of the sling as in it. I have been able to wear my coat for a week past; the surgeon, however, thinks it prudent, though not necessary, to keep on my bandage for a few days longer. I believe the arm has advanced as happily, as speedily, and with as little pain, as possible.

My spirit has been peaceful; it is a small thing to say resigned, for I have seen it a dispensation full of mercy, and have not been permitted to feel a wish that it had been otherwise. Especially as, through the Lord's mercy, Mrs. N**** felt no abiding ill effect from the great terror she was at first seized with, and which I feared might have brought a return of all her nervous complaints. But he is very gracious to us, and she is remarkably well.

I think you must have suffered more than I have done of late; but our faithful and good Shepherd affords to us both, strength according to our day. He knows our frame, and will lay no more

on us than he will enable us to bear: yea, I trust, no more than he will cause to work for our good: he delighteth in our prosperity; our comforts of every kind come free and undeserved. But when we are afflicted, it is because there is a need-be for it. He does it not willingly. Our trials are either salutary medicines, or honourable appointments, to put us in such circumstances as may best qualify us to show forth his praise. Usually he has both these ends in view; we always stand in need of correction; and when he enables us to suffer with patience, we are then happy witnesses to others of the truth of his promises, and the power of his grace in us. For nothing but the influence of God's good Spirit can keep us, at such times, either from despondence or impatience. If left to ourselves in trouble, we shall either sink down into a sullen grief, or toss and rebel like a wild bull in a net.

Our different posts are, as you observe, by the Lord's wise appointment; and therefore must be best for us respectively. Mine is full of trials and difficulties; indeed, I should soon make sad work of it without his continual help, and should have reason to tremble every moment, if he did not maintain in me a humble confidence that he will help me to the end. He bids me "Fear not;" and at the same time he says, "Happy is the man that feareth always." How to fear, and not to fear, at the same time, is, I believe, one branch of that secret of the Lord which none can understand but by the teaching of his Spirit. When I think of my heart, of the world, of the power of darkness, what cause of continual fear, I am on an enemy's ground, and cannot move a step but some snare is spread for my feet. But when I think of the person, grace, power, care, and faithfulness of my Saviour, why may I not say, I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. I wish to be delivered from anxious and unbelieving fear, which weakens the hands, and disquiets the heart. I wish to increase in a humble jealousy and distrust of myself, and of every thing about me; I am imperfect in both respects, but I hope my desire is to Him who has promised to do all things for me.

Your desire for the mortification of self, in every view and form, is, I hope, mine likewise. Yet I would regulate it by the word of God, so as not to expect more than is promised. I cannot properly expect a perfect exemption from conflict, because I believe it is the will of God I should have something to conflict with while I am here. To be sensible of the motions of sin in me, watchful against them, humbled for them, this I desire; and I believe the more I advance in grace, the more feelingly I shall say, "Behold, I am vile." But desirable and precious as sanctification is, it is not, I trust it will never be, the ground of my hope. Nor, were I as sinless as an angel in glory, could I have a better ground of hope than I

have at present. For acceptance, I rely, (oh that I indeed did,) simply, wholly, and solely, upon the obedience unto death of my surety.—Jesus is my righteousness, my life, and my salvation. I am still a sinner; but he who knew no sin was made sin for me, that I might be the righteousness of God in him. This right to eternal life by believing in the Son of God, is, in my view, equal in all who do so believe, and as perfect and sure when they first believe, as at the last moment of life; as perfect and sure in the thief on the cross, as in an apostle or martyr. An infant is as truly alive as a grown person, though all his members and faculties, are in a state of weakness. Therefore, with respect to my acceptance, I would put my graces as much out of the question as my actual sins. That word suited me at first, and will suit me to the end—"To him that worketh not, but believeth on him who justified the ungodly."

This morning (May-day) I preached for Mr. R**** a sermon to young people; it reminded me a little of my annual new-year's sermon at ———; but though I had some liberty, I feel a difference between speaking to one's own children, and those of another. They were my own proper charge, and the concern of their souls was laid upon me with a peculiar weight.

I am, dear Sir, &c.

LETTER II.

Dec. 3, 1780.

My Dear Sir,

The Lord is risen indeed. This is his day, when we are called to meet in his house, and (we in this branch of his family) to rejoice at his table. I meant to write yesterday, but could not. I trust it is not unsuitable to the design and privilege of this day, to give you a morning salutation in his name; and to say, Come magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. If I am not mistaken, I have met you this morning already. Were you not at Gethsemane; have you not been at Golgotha? did I not see you at the tomb? This is our usual circuit, yours and mine, on these mornings, indeed every morning; for what other places are worth visiting? what other objects are worth seeing? O this wonderful love! this blood of sovereign efficacy! the infallible antidote which kills sin, cures the sinner, gives sight to the blind, and life to the dead. How often have I known it turn sorrow into joy.

O thou Saviour and Sun of the soul, shine forth this morning, and cheer and gladden all our hearts! Shine upon me and mine, upon all whom I love, and on all who love thee! Shine powerfully on

my dear friends at ——, and let us know that, though we are absent from each other, thou art equally near to us all.

I must to breakfast, then dress, and away to court. Oh for a sight of the King! and oh to hear him speak! for his voice is music, and his person is beauty.—When he says, Remember me, and the heart hears, what a train of incidents is at once revived!—from the manger to the cross, what he said, what he did, how he lived, how he loved, how he died; all is marvellous, affecting, humbling, transporting! I think I know what I would be, and what I would do too if I could. How near would I get, how low would I fall, how would I weep and sing in a breath; and with what solemn earnestness would I recommend him to my fellow sinners. But, alas! when I would do good, evil is present with me. Pray for me, and help me likewise to praise the Lord, for his mercies are new every morning and every moment.

I am your affectionate.

LETTER III.

January 8, 1781.

My Dear Sir,

In my peregrinations to-day, I saw Mr. L****, Mr. R****, and Mrs. G****; Mr. G**** called here while I was abroad, so that I missed hearing your letter to him, but he read it to my dear; and I have seen a copy of your son's letter.

I understand your views and feelings so well, that my letter will not have such an air of condolence as some people might expect on a like occasion. The first thing that strikes me respecting your personal concern in the late awful calamity, calls rather for congratulation. I see your beloved son preserved in the midst of general ruin; in his preservation I see the immediate, the wonderful hand of the Lord stretched out; I consider it as an answer to your prayers; I humbly hope it is a token of further good respecting him, and that the restraining word, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it, is applicable to his case. I find, likewise, that but one life was lost on your estate, which, to a mind like yours, I am sure is an alleviating circumstance. For the rest, I am sure you have lost nothing but what He, if he sees it good, can restore with a large increase; nothing that is directly necessary to your peace and comfort even in the present life; nothing that is worth naming when compared to that which you love above all. You may still, and I trust you will, find the Lord as near, as gracious, and the light of his countenance as sweet, as cheering, as ever. And you have an estate in a kingdom which cannot be shaken, out of the

reach of earthquakes, hurricanes, and enemies. Indeed you do not think you have lost any thing, in strictness of speech, because you have been taught of God not to consider any thing you possess as properly your own. You feel yourself the Lord's servant and steward, and whether he is pleased to enlarge or abridge the talents he has intrusted to your care, your chief solicitude in either case, is to be faithful to every intimation of his will. I believe that if the whole produce of Jamaica centered in your warehouses, the Lord would not permit you to forget that you are a stranger and pilgrim upon earth; and I believe if you were not to receive a peppercorn from it in future, he would still make you happy in himself.

I judge thus for what he has done for you already; he has given you a taste and a desire which nothing but himself can satisfy; he has shown you the secret of his holy religion: and by leading you to fix your dependence upon him, has raised you to a noble state of independence with regard to creatures and contingencies, which are all in his hand, and can do us neither good nor harm but of his bidding.

Barbadoes and Martinico, it seems, have suffered still more. It is observable, that during the whole summer, while we and the French had large fleets in those seas, the Lord would not permit them to do any considerable harm on either side. He was pleased to take the business into his own hands, and has shown us how easily he can strike such a blow as shall constrain even enemies to commiserate each other.

Mr. P**** told me this morning, that it is supposed Jersey is taken. Thus the cloud grows darker. The flames of war are still spreading wider, and difficulties seem increasing on every side. The Lord's hand is lifted up; men will not see; thus far the prophecy is fulfilled. I tremble at what may further concern us in the following clause, "But, they shall see!" If he undertakes to make this insensible nation know that he is the Lord, he will certainly accomplish his purpose. What it may cost us before we learn the lesson, who can say? but he will be mindful of those that fear him. That word, "It shall be well with the righteous," cannot be broken. Hitherto the nation is in a deep sleep, and professors, I am afraid, are sadly slumbering. I can hardly find, any where around me, (alas! that I cannot find in myself,) a spirit of humiliation and prayer, in any degree answerable to the state of the times. Oh that the Lord would graciously revive us! We have, indeed, abundance of preaching and abundance of hearers; there are, doubtless, many individuals alive and in earnest, but the bulk of those who avow an attachment to the Gospel, are too little affected either for themselves or others.

Mrs. **** is pretty well, she has had but little complaint since P***n has been ill, who likewise is now getting better. The child

scalded her foot on new-year's day, through mercy but slightly: it was a gentle memorial to us how entirely dependent we are on his protection for safety in our smoothest hours. We are frail and feeble creatures, it is not needful to raise a hurricane to destroy us; were he only to withdraw his arm for a moment, some unthought-of evil would presently overwhelm us. It did not prevent her hearing my sermon to young people that night, but she has been confined to the house since. My health continues firm, and I am enabled to preach with apparent liberty, with what effect God only knows, but I am sometimes afraid there is more sound than power. I am well attended, and encouraged to hope that I do not labour wholly in vain.

May the grace of our good Shepherd be with us all. Let us praise him for what is past, and cheerfully trust him for what is to come. He knows where and what we are, and numbers the very hairs of our heads. I am, most affectionately,

Your much obliged, &c.

LETTER IV.

March 13, 1781.

My Dear Miss M****,

If wishes and purposes were always effectual, I should not have been so long three letters in debt to your house; I would answer all if I could, but perhaps it will take the leisure of two or three mornings to answer one, and the first must be to you, because it is so seldom I have one from you to answer.

I saw Mr. **** yesterday: he informed me of Mr. ****'s death; though I knew him not, I felt it as an event in which my dear Mr. B**** is concerned; and indeed the suddenness of it struck me. The uncertainty of life has been a theme for declamation in all ages, but by how few is it practically laid to heart! Happy they who know whom they have believed, and are waiting with desire his recall home to himself, that they may see him as he is! I am bound to pray that this bereaving stroke may be sanctified to his family. But Mr. **** told me something that affected me still more nearly. He says that Mrs. B**** has been worse this fortnight past. I believe I am foolish and inconsistent, but I cannot help it. When the Lord has taken her to himself, I hope I shall say, "Thy will be done." I hope I shall follow her with my thoughts, and feel some satisfaction in thinking—Now she is out of the reach of pain and sorrow for ever; now she sees her Saviour's face without a veil, and sings his praise without the inter-

ruption of a single sigh; now she is a pillar of the heavenly temple, and shall go no more out. But at present, and while she is continued with us, I feel an anxiety and a desire, which I fear are wrong: I feel unwilling to lose such a friend; and I am sure I feel for those who are more nearly interested in her than myself.

Tell her, dear Miss M., that Mrs. N. and I are not willing to think any but her own children can exceed us in love and sympathy; that we shall be thinking of her, speaking of her, and (I hope) praying for her daily, and for you all. Well, let the flesh say what it will, we know that all is well. We cannot love her so well as He that bought her with his blood. And, ah! how faint is our tenderness compared with his. He will not let his children feel one pain too many, or too sharp. He will enable them to glorify him even in the fire, and he will soon wipe away every tear.

I am glad to find that the Lord leads you further and deeper into the mysteries of his salvation. As a theory it may be expressed in a few words; but to live a life of faith on the Son of God as our wisdom, righteousness, and strength, considered as a matter of experience, is what we usually attain to by slow degrees, and at best, but imperfectly. We are always capable of further advances, and are frequently obliged to learn over again that which we thought we had learned already. My sentiments on this point seem tolerably clear, but in practice I fall sadly short, and feel that the principles of self and unbelief, are still deeply rooted in me. However, I trust I am in the school of the great Teacher, and I humbly hope he will carry on the work he has begun. What I want, what I pray for, is a simple, dependent spirit, to be willing to put myself entirely into his hands, to follow him without asking questions, to believe him without making objections, and to receive and expect every thing in his own time and in his way. This is the course we take when we consult an earthly physician; we consult him, but we do not pretend to direct him. Thus would I give myself up to my heavenly, infallible physician; but this is one branch of the good which, when I would do, I find evil is present with me. But it is likewise one part of the sickness I groan under, and which he has in mercy undertaken to cure; and therefore, though I am very sick indeed, I trust I shall not die, but live and declare his wonderful works.

I long aimed to be something. I now wish I was more heartily willing to be nothing. A cypher, a round 0 is by itself a thing of no value, and a million of them set in a row amounts to no more than a single one; but place a significant figure before the row, and you may soon express a larger number than you can well conceive. Thus my wisdom is 0, my righteousness is 0, my

strength is 0. But put the wisdom, power, and grace of Jesus before them, let me be united to him, let his power rest upon my weakness, and be magnified in it, in this way I shall be something. Not in and of myself, but in and from Him. Thus the apostle speaks of being *filled with all the fulness of God.* What an amazing expression! Thus, so far as we die to self, Christ liveth in us. He is the light by which we see; He is the life by which we live; He is the strength by which we walk, and by his immediate virtue and influence, all our works and fruits are produced. We have no sufficiency in ourselves, but we have all-sufficiency in Him, and at one and the same time we feel a conviction that we can do nothing, and an ability to do all things that fall within the line of our calling. When I am weak, then I am strong.

I am, dear Miss M****,

Your very affectionate and obliged servant.

LETTER V.

April 12, 1781.

My Dear Miss M****,

Accept my sincere, though rather tardy thanks for your favour of the 11th February; I beg you likewise to accept my assurance, that if leisure and opportunity were with me in any proportion to my inclination, your letters would be very speedily answered.

I knew you would be a favourable reader of Cardiphonia. Your kind partiality to the writer would dispose you to put the best construction on what you read; and your attachment to the design and principal subject of the letters, would make them welcome to you. We can put up with smaller faults, when a person is disposed to praise them whom we dearly love. I trust my pen is chiefly devoted to the praise of Jesus, your beloved; and so far as I succeeded, I am sure what I write will be acceptable to you. How can I but wish to praise him, when he has snatched me as a brand from the burning, and quenched the fire of my sins in his own blood! How can I but praise him, if he has given me a glance of his excellency! If any do not love him, it is surely because they do not know him. To see him but once with the eye of the soul is to be convinced that He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. His person is glory, his name is love, his work, from first to last, is grace. The moment the sinner is enabled to behold him, he is seized with greater admiration than the Queen of Sheba felt when brought into the presence of

Solomon; and is convinced that they only are happy who, as children and servants in his family, stand continually before him, to wait upon him, admire him, and hear his wisdom. But, ah! how faint are my conceptions; how little do I know of him! and how little of that little which I deem my knowledge, is realized to my heart! What trifles are sufficient to hide him from my view, and to make me almost forget that he is nearer to me than any object that strikes my sense! Is it so with you? Let us at least rejoice in prospect of the promised hour, when veils, and clouds, and walls shall be removed, and we shall see him as he is; so see him, as to have all our desires satisfied in him, and fixed upon him, and to be completely transformed into his image.

My mind frequently anticipates the pleasure I propose in a visit to B—, but it is not likely to take place so soon as I wished. I had hoped to leave London soon after Easter, but circumstances are likely to forbid it. My times are in the Lord's hand, and if he sees it best for me to be gratified, he will make it practicable, and his providence will likewise determine the fittest season. I I wish not to be impatient, but to refer myself to him. This is certain, when he opens the door, and says, Go, I shall set off with alacrity, for I long to walk upon that lawn, and to sit in that tub, and to converse with those dear friends who have, deservedly, so much of my heart.

Thank Miss M**** for her letter. We rejoice to hear that your dear mamma is better. I believe I think of her daily, and often in the day; and this not only for the love I bear her, but for my own relief.—Mrs. N. is often ill, sufficiently so to awaken my feelings for her. But when I reflect how the power, grace, and faithfulness of our Lord and Saviour support under much severer trials, it disposes me, in some measure, to submission, thankfulness, and confidence. *Our* trials are light, ourselves being judges: But I see that he can make those that appear to be heaviest tolerable. I shall certainly write before I come, when I can fix the time, and then, except something extraordinary interferes to require it, I shall not easily alter my plan, for if we cannot be with convenience in the same house, it will be worth something to be in the same town, and just to look at Mrs. B. a few minutes occasionally, if she can bear to receive us, and if she can bear no more. For I believe another interview with her, before the Lord sends his chariot and angels to remove her from this land of sorrow, will be the principal and most interesting object of our journey. Our other friends, if we are spared, we may hope to see at some future time. I consider her as in the situation of the apostle when he wrote 2 Tim. iv. 6.

I am preparing materials for two more volumes of Cardiphonia. My present thought is, to have them ready for publication at a time when my pen will no longer be able to move. Whether any circumstances may send them abroad sooner I know not; but, at my time of life, I ought to consider that period as not likely to be at a very great distance. I do not wish to be impatient for its arrival; but I do wish my willingness to live longer here, was more simply and solely from a desire of promoting my Lord's service, and the edification of his children; I hope this is not out of my mind, but I am afraid it is shamefully debased by an undue attachment to earthly things, and a want of spirituality. I am yours, &c.

A LETTER

TO

****

June 8, 1780.

My Dear Madam,

Though I write to both when I write to one, it seems time to drop a word expressly to you, that I may keep you in my debt, and maintain a hope of hearing from you again.

I sympathize with my friends at ———, under the afflictive dispensations with which the Lord has been pleased to visit the town. He has a merciful design even when he inflicts, and I hope the rod will be sanctified to those who are too negligent under the public means of grace. I am not sorry for Mrs. H****'s death, as you say she died in the Lord, for she had but little prospect of temporal comfort. The death of Mrs. *** affected me more on account of her husband and family, to whom I hoped she would have been a comfort and a blessing. But we are sure the Lord does all things wisely and well. The moment in which he calls his people home, is precisely the best and fittest season. Let us pray (and we shall not pray in vain) for strength proportioned to our day; then we have only to wait with patience; our time likewise will shortly come. The bright, important hour of dismission from this state of trial is already upon the wing towards us, and every pulse brings it nearer. Then every wound will be healed, and every desirable desire be satisfied.

I believe you must now take the will for the deed, and give me credit for what I would have said or written if I could. Mrs. —— came in and engrossed the time I had allotted for your letter. I knew not how to grudge it her; she had wished to spend an hour with me; her conversation, I think, was from the heart, and I believe the interruption was right. If it should abridge the pleasure I proposed in writing to you, I must make myself amends some other time.

Mrs. N—— has some degree of the head-ache to-day. But her complaints of that kind are neither so frequent, nor so violent, as when at ——. His mercies to us are great, and renewed every morning.

I have still a quarter of an hour for you; but now, when opportunity presents, a subject is not at hand, and I have no time to rumi-

nate. I will tell you a piece of old news. The Lord God is a sun and shield, and both in one. His light is a defence: his protection is cheering; a shield so long, and so broad, as to intercept and receive every arrow with which the quiver of divine justice was stored, and which would have otherwise transfixed your heart and mine; a shield so strong that nothing now can pierce it, and so appositely placed that no evil can reach us, except it first makes its way through our shield. And what a sun is this shield! when it breaks forth it changes winter into summer, and midnight into day, in an instant; a sun whose beams can not only scatter clouds, but the walls which Sin and Satan are aiming to build, in order to hide it from our view.

Public affairs begin to look more pleasing just when they were most desperate. Affairs in America are in a more favourable train. A peace with Spain supposed upon the *tapis*. I should hope for some halcyon days after the storm, but for the awful insensibility which reigns at home. But if the Lord revives his people, we may hope he will hear their prayers.

Mr. **** bids fair to be as unpopular in the course of another month as any of his opponents have been. This is a changeable world. The inns and the outs, being fastened upon the same rolling wheel, have each their turn to be uppermost. Really, one is tempted to smile and constrained to weep in the same breath.—The Lord bless yon and keep you.

I am, for self and partner,

Most affectionately yours.

THREE LETTERS

TO

MISS G***.

LETTER I.

July 11, 1783.

MADAM,

I HAVE been much affected with your present situation, and with the case which you did me the honour to propose me for my own judgment. I hope it is from some real sense of my own weakness, that I usually undertake the office of casuist with fear and trembling. How unhappy should I be to mislead you in a point of such importance! How cruel, to wish you to be determined by my decision, except I am sure it is warranted by the word of God! Indeed, you have been hardly out of my thoughts since I saw you in the garden. I have considered, again and again, the advice I ventured to give you, and I am the more confirmed in the propriety of it; and in a persuasion that if the Lord (for what are our resolves without him?) enables you to act the part which you seemed to be satisfied was right, you will never have just cause to blame either yourself or me. I think the Lord highly honours you, by permitting you to be brought to such a trial, and thereby putting it in your power of giving both to the church and to the world, (so far as you are known,) such a singular and striking proof of the sincerity of your heart towards him. Surely I shall not cease to pray, that he who has wrought in you to will, may strengthen you with his power to act accordingly; and that you may do it with cheerfulness. You have good reason for it, madam. He for whose sake you are about to reject what many would eagerly receive, deserves it well at your hands. He gave up much more for you; he became very poor that you might be rich. And though he was once poor for us, he is now rich again: rich enough to make you ample amends for all you give up. Be not afraid. His own kind providence will take charge of you, and surely do you good. Were your conduct generally known, you would be blamed or pitied, by those who know of nothing better than gold, and such toys as gold can purchase. But they will neither blame nor pity you in the great day of your Lord's appearance. When I see so much interested and formal profession, I should be almost discou-

raged, were it not that the Lord has given me to know a happy and favoured few, whose conduct exemplifies and adorns the glorious gospel they profess. In them I see a simplicity, a spirituality, a disinterestedness, a submission, and a ready obedience becoming the servants of such a Master. They have made the choice of Moses; they endure as seeing him who is invisible, and prefer even the reproach of Christ to all the treasures of Egypt. The sight of one such person in the house of God, animates and comforts a minister more than a crowd of common hearers. I bless the Lord that I have the honour of preaching to more than one of this description. Go on, madam; may the Lord be with you. I pray for you, and I rejoice in the hope, that I shall soon have to congratulate you that the Lord has given you a complete deliverance, a victory, and filled your heart and mouth with his praise. Think of the reward promised to them that overcome, Rev. ii. and iii. What can the world propose worthy to be put in competition with these?

I am, Madam,
Your sincerely affectionate servant.

LETTER II.

July 14, 1783.

DEAR MADAM,

I WAS much affected and comforted by your obliging answer to my letter yesterday. I believe, as you say, there was something providential in my writing, and, indeed, in the timing of my late agreeable visit, where I had the unexpected pleasure of meeting with you. On Saturday, when I had a quite different business in hand, a thought struck me, which made me lay aside what I was engaged in, to prepare a letter which I thought I could get conveyed to you from church; not thinking I should see you there, and have an opportunity of putting it into your own hand. As you say it proved a means of confirming your mind, I have reason to praise the Lord (to whom I would ascribe every good and useful motion) for putting it into my heart to write. I rejoice in your determination; persuaded that the principle upon which you act will bear you through, and that the Lord, whom you desire to serve, will, either in kind, or in kindness, afford you a testimony that he approves of your conduct. We are short-sighted as to consequences, but he knows what he is about to do. You have, in his promises, upon which he has enabled you to trust, a greater treasure by far than the Bank of England; and therefore you can be no loser by declining an offer which he only permitted to be made for

the trial of your faith and integrity. I have been, likewise, in my time, called to make sacrifices, and to give up seeming advantages for conscience' sake, though certainly mine were trifles compared with yours, as you are now situated; and my own experience, as well as my frequent observation of others, convinces me, that though we may appear to lose something for the Lord, we shall not eventually lose by him. But what I recollect of such things in my own case, and of the manner in which I was led through them, makes me take the liberty of offering a further word of advice upon the subject. In the first place, I would not have you wonder, if, when your determination is fixed, and the affair quite at an end, you should find, instead of your path being made smoother immediately, fresh difficulties and exigencies arise. I hope it will not be so; but it was so with me. I met with pinches that at times almost staggered me, and strongly tempted me to repent that I had been, (as the thought in a dark hour intruded upon me) too scrupulous, and had brought inconveniences upon myself by a punctilio. Still, however, my better judgment spoke a different language, and assured me, it was not a punctilio, but evidently connected with duty and peace of conscience. I could not, I durst not, deliberately repent that I had acted right; but, as I said, I was tempted to it. The Lord kept me steadfast, as far as outward conduct was concerned; but he alone knows the evil workings of my heart at some seasons. I was, however, supported; and in due time light broke through the darkness, difficulties were removed, he made me good amends, even in a temporal way, for what I had given up; besides, the opportunity it afforded of commending my profession and character, even to the people of the world, who had before affected to despise me as an enthusiast. They seemed to think, many of them to allow, that my religion was better than theirs, because it had enabled me to part with that which they felt they could not have parted with in similar circumstances. If you should be tried something in the like way, tarry the Lord's leisure; wait patiently upon and for him, and you shall one day see he has not forgotten you, though he should permit you a while to be tried whether you will hold fast your integrity. Perhaps, when the Lord has enabled us to act honourably in very difficult, ensnaring circumstances, the greatest danger we are liable to is, lest we should be insensibly drawn into a too good opinion of our own resolution and constancy, and indulge a secret, self-confidence, instead of giving the whole praise to the Lord. I cannot forget that I felt this evil, nor how much I suffered by it; for the Lord, who mercifully watched over me for good, to prevent my being exalted above measure, was pleased, at the same time that he enabled me to conquer in a greater trial, to leave me to my own weaknes in much smaller; so that I was left to hesitate, stum-

ble, and fall, in some things so seemingly trivial, that I should have been ashamed of mentioning them to my most intimate friend. Excuse my mentioning this. I trust the caution will to you be unnecessary, after the noble stand the Lord has enabled you to make. I have nothing to wish or pray for you, but that he may preserve you humble and thankful. Mrs. *** unites with me in love to you. Need I say, that we shall be very glad to see you whenever it suits you to call upon us?

Believe me to be,

Very affectionately and sincerely, yours.

LETTER III.

August 19, 1783.

DEAR MADAM,

METHINKS I well understand the apostle, when he speaks of being present with his friends in spirit, while absent from them in the body. How often have I been at London, and at N——, since I came here! Besides this, I usually convey myself once a day in the shape of a letter; and this morning I mean to make you a visit. May I arrive in a good hour; and may the Lord put some good and seasonable word in my way, that your heart may be comforted. The good hand of the Lord brought us hither in peace and safety; and we are hitherto favoured with a preservation from illness, though many are ill around us, and many are falling every day. I do not remember so many people being ill with fevers at one time during the eighteen years I lived here. I am now very busy amongst a people whom I have long loved, and who are glad to see me; and though I am going from house to house almost all day and every day, I shall hardly be able to see them all while I stay. Health, when rightly valued and duly improved, is a great mercy. I hope you have it, and find it so. The mind not only suffers by what the body feels when ill, but is, for the most part, indisposed by it for the enjoyments of its best privileges. An aching head, or a sick stomach, take off our chariot wheels, engage our attention to our infirmities, preclude us from public ordinances, or unfit us for hearing if abroad, and for any spiritual exercises when at home. At such a time we can do little more than simply cast ourselves upon the Lord's care, and wait his will. Indeed, it is well if we can do so much; for to exercise faith and patience at such a time, is a great thing. If health and spirits are good, we are so far prepared to meet and support the daily trials of life. I hope you are thus armed, yea, much

better; that you are favoured with a peaceful frame of mind, a sense of the Lord's presence, and a persuasion that his arm will support you and surely do you good. Be of good courage; trust in the Lord with all your heart; take up your daily cross, whatever it may be; he is your shepherd and guide, to whom you have committed yourself, and you may be assured that he will lead you the right way. I can easily conceive that many things in your present situation must be unpleasant to you; but while they are so, they will not be hurtful; and the Lord, who has assigned you your present post, is at hand to support you in it, and I trust will honour you with some usefulness while he continues you. Live with him to-day, and leave to-morrow in his hands. Do not let your spirits be burdened as though you were bound to perform impossibilities; but make the best you can of things as they lie before you. You are placed where you are to be a witness for him; perhaps he designs to make you an instrument of good to some who are around you; your example and conduct may have an influence in this way far beyond what you expect, even when you do not see it proper to speak a word; but sometimes probably, a word will be put into your mouth, and you will not speak in vain. If he had not enabled you to make the choice of Moses, you would have avoided the trials you find at N———; you would, probably, before this time have entered a very different path of life. The world would have either congratulated or envied you; but I should have pitied you. You would soon have felt (what the Lord enabled you to consider without making the experiment) how little the fine things of this world can contribute to happiness. Every day would have shown you more of their vanity, and every day would have discovered to you new instances of the solid and real evils and troubles which are connected with them. You would either have been carried away with the stream, to the wounding of your conscience and the loss of your spiritual discernment; or, if enabled to stand your ground, you would have found a thorn in every step you took.

Blessed be the Lord, who inspired you with wisdom and strength to resist the golden temptation! I said then, and I say still, you will never have just cause to repent it. Continue humbly to commit your way to him; he will take care of you, and he can give you, even in temporals, what, upon the whole, shall be much more valuable and comfortable than all that you give up. However that may be, his loving-kindness, and the light of his countenance, are better than life itself. I warned you, though you knew it before, that the enemy would try, as far as permitted, to distress and worry you. But regard him not. Resist him,

and he will flee from you. You are in the path of duty; what you cannot alter, bear patiently, and the Lord, in his own time, will make the crooked straight. You are in a peculiar sense, the charge of his providence, and he will not leave you nor forsake you. We hope to be at home on the evening of the 5th. I have great reason to be pleased with my excursion; and, blessed be the Lord, the thought of returning to London is very pleasant to me likewise. There (with respect to this world) my treasure is, and there is my heart also. The opportunities of preaching his word, and of intercourse with his dear people, the many kind and valuable friends he has given me are more to me than all the mines of Peru.

Let us love, and sing, and wonder,
Let us praise the Saviour's name.

Let the world take the world; for you and for me the Lord has provided better things. Oh for grace to be humble, thankful, circumspect, and exemplary, that our light may shine to his praise! I commend you to his gracious protection, and am,

Dear Madam,

Yours most sincerely.

THREE LETTERS

TO

MRS. C***.

LETTER I.

May 29, 1784.

My Dear Madam,

We have heard that you have been sick, and I write in hopes of obtaining an answer, to inform me that you have experienced the help and power of the great Physician, and that you arenow better. I know, indeed, beforehand, that, whether sick or well, you are just as you should be, and that what the Lord chooses for you is always the best. But the Gospel, though calculated to form us (rebellious as we are by nature) to a cheerful acquiescence in his will, and to regulate our sensibility, is not designed to suppress it. The same love which rejoices in the comforts of others will likewise sympathize with them in affliction. We are directed to pray for one another in this view, that, if it be the Lord's pleasure to prolong life to restore health, our sense of the mercy may be heightened by the consideration that it is bestowed in answer to prayer. You do not properly need my prayers and wishes, you are safe in the hands of infinite wisdom and love; and if you were in a wilderness, remote from all society, you could not be sick or afflicted an hour longer than the Lord saw necessary to answer some gracious purpose in your favour. But this is his institution, that as members of the same body, we should maintain a fellowship and sympathy, helping together by prayer, that so, for the gift bestowed by means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our account. It pleases me to think that, though I am much and often surrounded with noise, smoke, and dust, my friend Mrs. C*** enjoys the beautiful scenes of rural life. O how I long sometimes to spend a day or two among woods, and lawns, and brooks, and hedge-rows, to hear the birds sing in the bushes, and to wander among the sheep and lambs, or to stand under the shadow of an old oak, upon a hill top! Thus I lived at Olney; how different is London! But, hush! Olney was the place once, London is the place now. Hither the Lord brought me, and here he is pleased to support

me, and in some measure, (I trust,) to own me. I am satisfied. Come, I hope I can make a good shift without your woods, and bushes, and pastures. What is the prospect from the finest hill in Essex, compared with the prospect I have from St. Mary's pulpit? What is the singing of birds, compared with the singing our hymn after sermon on a Sunday evening? What the bleating of lambs, compared with the lispings of inquiring souls, who are seeking after Jesus! No, welcome noise, and dust, and smoke, so that we may but be favoured with his gracious presence in our hearts, houses, and ordinances. This will make all situations nearly alike, if we see the Lord's hand placing us in it, are enabled to do his will, and to set him before us, as our Lord and our Beloved. You will please to present my good wishes to Mrs. B****, and likewise Miss D***, if she is with her. He, in whose presence is life, whose loving-kindness is better than life, be with you all. Though we do not see each other, we are not far asunder. The throne of grace is a centre, where thousands daily meet in spirit, and have real, though secret communion with each other. They eat of one bread, walk by one rule; they have one Father and one home. There they will shortly meet, to part no more. They will shine, each one, like the sun. They will form a glorious constellation, millions of suns shining together in their Lord's kingdom. How pleased is Satan when he can prevail to to set those at variance, who are in so many respects united! but such is his subtlety, and such their weakness, which he practises upon, that he has often prevailed thus. Sometimes he shuts them up so close within the paper walls of a denomination, that they cannot see an inch beyond the bounds of their own party. Sometimes he holds his magical glass before their eyes, and when they thus view each other through the medium of prejudice, they seem so mutually and so strangely metamorphosed, that perhaps both leaders and people are shocked, disgusted, and terrified at the sight of those who are as near the Lord as themselves. Here and there one escapes the general delusion; these wonder at the bustle around them, and endeavour to persuade the rest to peace, and love as becometh brethren, and perhaps are requited with the reproaches of both sides, as neutrals, time-servers, and cowards. But these peace-makers are blessed, approved of God, and beloved by all men who are in possession of their spiritual senses. Through mercy my dear madam, neither, you nor I are to be scared by such words as Methodist or Calvinist. We see there is both wheat and chaff among all parties, and that they who love the Lord Jesus Christ, are a people scattered abroad at this

time, as they were in the apostles' days, 1 Pet. i. 1. We are much as usual. Accept our cordial love. Shall I beg you to pray for me and mine? I know you will.

Believe me to be,

Your affectionate and obliged.

LETTER II.

Nov. 27, 1784.

MY DEAR MADAM,

WHAT shall I say to the intelligence which Mr. C—— (judging rightly of our affection for you) was so kind as to bring me this morning? May I not say, without sinning, that I am sorry, very sorry? If I said otherwise I should be a hypocrite. If Mrs. —— or I could have prevented it, you should not have fallen. Our gracious Lord, who condescended to take our nature upon him, took it with all the feelings belonging to it which are not sinful. He was truly a man, and sympathized like a man with the afflictions of his friends. Instead of sharply rebuking Mary and Martha for their tears when their brother died, he kindly wept with them, though he had determined to raise him again from the dead. I allow myself, therefore, to be sorry for your fall and hurt, and to feel a solicitude till I hear further of you. Perhaps Mrs. B—— may favour me with a line of information, if, as I apprehend, you may not be able to write yourself. But now, to use the apostle's expression, "I have spoken as a man," let me look at you in another point of view. The Lord, who by his grace has enabled you to devote and intrust yourself to him, has engaged, by his promise, to take care of you, and to keep you in all your ways. Under his protection you have been safe a number of years; and did he fail you at last? Far from it: his eye was as directly upon you, his arm as certainly with you when you fell, as at any other moment of your life. And you would no more have fallen, than the planets can fall from their orbits, without his permission and appointment. This event must work for your good, because he has promised that all things shall. If I could assign no other reason for those dispensations to his children, which, upon the first impression, are apt to startle us, this ought to be a sufficient reason, not only to silence but to satisfy us, that, It is the Lord. For, can infinite wisdom mistake, or infinite goodness do any thing that is unkind? But I see other reasons why, in the present state of things, all things should appear as happening alike to all; and that his own people,

who are freed from guilt and condemnation, and to whom he manifests himself as he does not unto the world, should not be therefore exempted from a share in any of the outward afflictions to which sin has rendered mankind liable. I can see many inconveniences which would follow, if they who love the Lord were distinguished from the world around them by a visible mark in their foreheads. But if his providence universally preserved them from the calamities which others feel, so that it should be notorious, and generally known that their persons were always safe, and that no true believer ever suffered by falls, fires, broken bones, and the like; such an exemption, in this calamitous state, would distinguish and point them out, almost as plainly as if they were surrounded with a glory, as the apostles are sometimes represented in popish pictures. Besides, how should it be known that the Lord whom they serve can make them cheerful and comfortable, under those trials and sufferings which the flesh naturally shrinks at, unless they were now and then put into such circumstances. I trust, madam, you are of the same mind with a good woman I heard of about thirty years ago. She was very aged, and very poor. One day, in attempting to cross the way in Whitechapel, a cart threw her down, and she broke her thigh. She was taken into a house, and many people were soon about her, expressing their concern; but she said, "I thank you for your pity; but all is very well, and I hope I have not one bone in my body but is willing to be broken, if such be the Lord's will." What may be the issue of this fall as to yourself, I know not. It is a greater thing to heal a broken heart than a broken bone. So long as I hear that you are alive, I shall probably feel a wish that you may live a little longer. I shall therefore commend you to him to whom belong the issues from death, being assured that you are immortal till the appointed number of your sufferings and services shall be completed; but if your fall should prove a means of hastening your removal to the church triumphant, then, however I and your many friends may regret our own loss, we ought to rejoice in your gain. As this may possibly be the event, though I am willing to hope otherwise, I take a sort of leave of you, begging that while you do remain on this side Jordan, you will pray for me and mine, that we may have grace to follow you while we live, and to follow you when we die, to that heavenly home, where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. Oh, madam, what a prospect awaits you!

Oh what hath Jesus bought for me;
Before my ravish'd eyes
Rivers of life divine I see,
And trees of Paradise!

I see a world of spirits bright,
Who taste the pleasures there!
They all are rob'd in spotless white,
And conquering palms they bear.

Ah, that robe, that crown, those songs! surely it is unspeakably better to depart and to be with Jesus. If he calls you, I must and will consent to let you go; but I shall miss you. If he is pleased to raise you up, I shall rejoice to see you again. Mrs. N**** joins me in best love, and in our respects to Mrs. B****.

I am, dear Madam,
Your very affectionate and obliged servant.

LETTER III.

Feb. 25, 1785.

My Dear Madam,

According to strict propriety, I should address myself to Mrs. B****, having an obliging letter of hers to acknowledge. But the account Mr. C*** lately gave me of your health, determines me to beg her excuse, and to write to you, not knowing how long you may be within the reach of the post. I cannot flatter myself that you will continue a great while in this poor world, or that I can reasonably expect to see you again. The comfort is, that though Christian friendship is very pleasing, and Christian conference be very profitable when rightly managed, yet we are not necessary to each other. We are absolutely dependent upon the Lord, but not necessarily dependent upon any creatures. They smile upon us when he bids them; they do us good when he sends them, but they cannot benefit us without *him;* and, on the other hand, he can well supply their absence or inability, and do every thing for us without *them.* Though I seldom saw you when you were in London, yet it gave me pleasure to think I might expect to see you now and then. When you are gone to heaven this pleasure will fail—I shall see you no more here; I shall miss you; and in a little while I hope we shall meet again there. But where is heaven? Is it an immense distance beyond the fixed stars? Have our ideas of space any thing to do with it? Is not heaven often upon earth in proportion as the presence of God is felt? was not the apostle caught up thither, though he knew not whether he was in the body or not, and consequently was not sure that he had changed his place? Is there not joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth? Perhaps the redeemed of the Lord, as well as his angels, are nearer to us than we are aware. Perhaps they see us, though we see not them. Perhaps

nothing but this veil of flesh and blood prevents us from seeing them likewise. However, on our part the barrier is impenetrable! O the wonders that will break in upon our mind, when death shall open the barrier to us! What shall we then see? It is sufficient for us at present to know that we shall see Jesus. We shall see him as he is, and we shall be like him. The circumstances of the heavenly state, if I may so speak, are hidden from us; but this which constitutes the essence of it, we can form some faint apprehension of from our present experience. All that deserves the name of happiness here, consists of such conceptions of Jesus, and such measures of conformity to him, as are attainable while in a mortal and defiled nature. But we see him only as in a glass, darkly and in part, but when that which is perfect arrives, that which is in part shall be done away. We shall be all eye, all ear, all activity, in the communications of his love, and in the celebration of his praise. Here we are almost upon a level with worms; there we shall rise to an equality with angels. In some respects our privilege will be superior to theirs. Angels cannot sing the song of the redeemed, nor claim so near a relation to Him that sitteth upon the throne. Are not these things worth dying for; I congratulate you, madam; you have almost finished your course; and he who has enabled you to keep the faith, and to fight the good fight, will shortly give you the conqueror's crown, prepared for you, and for all who love his appearing. They are many crowns, and yet one. The blessings of the other world are not like the wealth of this world, which is diminished in proportion to the numbers among whom it is divided. There each one shall possess the whole; as here we enjoy the light of the sun, though millions enjoy it with us, as fully as we could if there were none upon earth but ourselves to see it. You will likewise soon be removed from all evil. You are going where pain, and sickness, and sorrow, and temptation, and sin have no place. Where your eyes and your heart will be no more grieved with the wickedness of the world, where no one will ask you, with a taunt, What is thy beloved more than another beloved? In a word, where death shall be swallowed up in life, and where the miserable effects of our fall from God shall be no more perceived, than we can perceive a stone that is sunk in the midst of the mighty ocean. I do not ask nor expect you to write an answer. I see you too weak, to wish to impose such a task upon you. I only beg that while you stay below, you will remember me and mine in prayer. Mrs. N——— sends her affectionate remembrance with mine.

Believe me to be
Your sincere friend and obliged servant.

Miscellaneous Papers,

EXTRACTED FROM

PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS.

FROM THE

THEOLOGICAL MISCELLANY.

A LETTER TO A FRIEND IN TROUBLE.

My Dear Madam,

The letter we received yesterday from Mr. ****, has given us some painful feelings for you both. He says you are lower in your spirits than usual. By this time, I hope, the Lord hath raised your spirits again: I wonder not that they sometimes droop. Your part is trying and solitary, affording many handles, which the enemy, if permitted, knows how to take hold of. The pressure of your troubles is further aggravated by their long continuance. It is one thing to stand tolerably in a skirmish, when it is but a brush and away, like a hasty shower in a summer's day, which presently leaves us in full possession of the the sun again: it is quite a different thing to endure patiently, when a trial lasts, not for days or months, but from year to year, when expectation seems to fail, and all our scouts return to tell us, there is no perceptible abatement of the waters.

But is this the way to raise your spirits? Instead of giving you sal-volatile as I designed, I had almost mistaken the vial. Let us try again. Ay, this is it. Read this inscription, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." No wonder that we are often sorrowing in such a world as this; but to be always rejoicing, though in the midst of tribulation, this may seem strange; but it is no more strange than true. When I want witness to this truth in open court, I may confidently subpœna you to confirm it.

They who would always rejoice, must derive their joy from a source which is invariably the same; in other words, from Jesus. Oh, that name! what a person, what an office, what a love, what a life, what a death, does it recal to our minds! Come, madam, let us leave *our* troubles to themselves for a while, and let us walk to Golgatha, and there take a view of *his*. We stop, as we are going, at Gethsemane, for it is not a step out of the road. There he lies, bleeding, though not wounded, or, if wounded, it is by an invisible, and almighty hand. Now I begin to see what sin has done. Now let me bring my sorrows, and compare, measure, and weigh them, against the sorrows of my Saviour! Foolish attempt! to weigh a mote against a mountain, against the universe! Thus far we have attained already, and aim to say,

Now let our pains be all forgot,
Our hearts no more repine!
Our sufferings are not worth a thought,
When, Lord, compar'd with thine.

We are still more confirmed at our next station. Now we are at the foot of the cross. Behold the Man! attend to his groans; contemplate his wounds. Now let us sit down here a while and weep for our crosses, if we can. For our crosses! Nay, rather let us weep for our sins, which brought the Son of God into such distress. Agreed. I feel that we, not He, deserved to be crucified, and to be utterly forsaken. But this is not all: his death not only shows our desert, but seals our pardon. For a fuller proof, let us take another station. Now we are at his tomb. But the stone is rolled away. He is not here. He is risen. The debt is paid, and the surety discharged. Not here! where then is He? Look up! Methinks the clouds part, and glory breaks through—Behold a throne! What a transition? He who hung upon the cross, is seated upon the throne! Hark! he speaks! May every word sink deep into your heart and mine! He says, "I know your sorrows, yea, I appoint them; they are tokens of my love; it is thus I call you to the honour of following me. See a place prepared for you near to myself! Fear none of these things be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." It is enough, Lord. Now then let us compute, let us calculate again. These scales are the balances of the sanctuary. Let us put in our trials and griefs on one side. What an alteration! I thought them lately very heavy: now I find them light; the scale hardly turns with them. But how shall we manage to put in the weight on the other side? It is heavy indeed: an exceeding, eternal weight of glory. It is beyond my grasp and power. No matter. Comparison is needless. I see, with the glance of an eye, there is no proportion. I am content. I am satisfied. I am ashamed. Have I been so long mourning, and is this all the cause? Well, if the flesh will grieve, it shall grieve by itself. The Spirit, the Lord enabling me, shall rejoice, yea, it does. From this moment I wipe away my tears, and forbid them to flow; or, if I must weep, they shall be tears of gratitude, love, and joy! The bitter is sweet; the medicine is food. But the cloud closes. I can no longer see what I lately saw. However, *I have seen it.* I know it is there. He ever liveth, full of compassion and care, to plead for me above, to manage for me below. He is mine, and I am his; therefore all is well.

I hope this little walk will do us both good. We have seen wonderful things to-day! Wonderful in themselves, and wonderful in their efficacy to compose our spirits, and to make us willing to suffer on. Blessed be God for his unspeakable gift.

Having written thus far, I made a digression to the Jews' synagogue. Though born and bred in London, I was never there before. On my return I may say, Blessed be God not only for the gift of his Son, but for the gift of his Spirit! What a gross darkness overwhelms that unhappy people! With the holy Scriptures in their hands, how utterly are they ignorant of their true meaning! And what multitudes of professed christians, who can pity or smile at their superstitions, are equally though differently mistaken! Hence we have another argument for thankful submission. Supposing our life could have passed without a single trial, yet if we had lived and died ignorant of God and of ourselves, our happiness, preferable to that of the most afflicted, would have been but like the poor marks of distinction paid to a state-criminal of rank, who is attended to the place of execution with a parade not allowed to the vulgar, but must undergo the same punishment when he comes thither. How trivial is such a pre-eminence! What do all past pleasures and advantages now avail the worldling who died this morning? What is the believer, who died this morning, the worse now for the trials which he met with in his path to glory? Quite the reverse; he now sees that they were directed and adjusted to promote and secure his progress, and to shield him from still greater evils, to which he was otherwise exposed. Let us abide by the conclusion, which our judgment assures us he now makes. It will appear as plain and self-evident to us likewise, when we shall be called to take possession of our lot in the inheritance of the saints in light.

If you have lately been in conflict with the enemy, I hope this will find you praising the Lord for a new victory. If under bodily indisposition, I hope his gracious hands have already brought you health and cure, accompanied with a further discovery of the abundance of peace and truth.

I am, Madam,

Your affectionate,

OMICRON.

THOUGHTS ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

THERE is, perhaps, no one test or proof of the reality of a work of grace upon the heart, more simple, clear, and infallible, than the general tenour of our language and conversation; for our Lord's aphorism is of certain and universal application, that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." To the same purpose the apostle James proposes to all, who make profession of the Gospel, a searching criterion of their sincerity, when he says,

"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." This passage should not be thought a hard saying, for it stands in the Bible; but because it stands in the Bible, and forms a part of the rule by which the characters and states of all men will be finally determined, there is reason to fear that it will be found a hard saying at last, by too many who name the name of Christ. A few thoughts upon this important subject can never be unseasonable.

It is not the restraint of the heart the apostle requires. He knew, that though it be our duty to watch against the first rising motions of evil within, and to be humbled for them, it is not in our power wholly to prevent them; but he supposes that the grace of God in a true believer will check the evils of the heart, and prevent them from breaking out by the tongue.

Nor is the restraint of the tongue to be taken so strictly, as if a believer was never liable to speak unadvisedly. Job and Jeremiah cursed the day of their birth; and Peter not only denied his Lord, but denied him with oaths and execrations. I allow it possible that the best of men, in an unguarded hour, and through the pressure of some sudden and violent temptation or provocation, may occasionally act or speak unsuitably to their habitual character. But I think the apostle must mean thus much at least, that when grace is in the heart, it will so regulate and control the tongue, that it shall not customarily offend; and that without some evidence of such a regulation, we are not bound to acknowledge any man to be a Christian, however splendid his profession may be in other respects. Nay, I think we may further say of this *test*, what the magicians of Egypt acknowledged upon another occasion, "this is the finger of God!" This is, perhaps, the only outward mark of a believer which the hypocrite cannot imitate. In many things he may seem to be religious; in some, perhaps, he may appear to go beyond the real Christian; but because his heart is naught, he cannot bridle his tongue.

The man who seems, and who desires to be thought religious, may have many qualifications to support his claim, which may be valuable and commendable in themselves, and yet are of no avail to the possessor, if he bridleth not his tongue. He may have much religious knowledge, I mean of such knowledge as may be acquired in the use of ordinary means. He may have a warm zeal, and may contend earnestly (in his way) for the faith once delivered to the saints. He may be able to talk well on spiritual subjects, to pray with freedom and fervency; yea, he may be a preacher, and acquit himself to the satisfaction of sincere Christians; or, he may be a fair trader, a good neighbour, a kind master, and affectionate husband or parent, be free from gross vices, and attend constantly upon the ordinances. Will not such a man

seem to himself, and probably be esteemed by others, to be religious? Yet if, with all these good properties, he does not bridle his tongue, he may be said to want the one thing needful. He deceiveth his own heart; his religion is vain.

But what are we to understand by bridling the tongue? The expression, I think, will be sufficiently explained by considering how the grace of God will necessarily influence and govern the tongues of those who partake of it, in what they say when they are led to speak of God, of themselves, and of or to their fellow-creatures. Having seen a glimpse of the holiness and majesty, the glory and the grace, of the great God with whom they have to do, their hearts are impressed with reverence, and therefore there is a sobriety and decorum in their language. They cannot speak lightly of him, or of his ways. One would suppose that no person, who even but seems to be religious, can directly and expressly profane his name. But there is a careless manner of speaking of the great God, which is very disgusting and very suspicious. So likewise, the hearts of believers teach their mouths to speak honourably of God under all their afflictions and crosses, acknowledging the wisdom and the mercy of his dispensations; and if an impatient word escapes them, it grieves and humbles them, as quite unbecoming their situation as his creatures, and especially as sinful creatures, who have always reason to acknowledge, that it is of the Lord's mercy they are not wholly consumed.

When they speak of themselves, their tongues are bridled, and restrained from boasting. They speak as becomes poor, unworthy creatures, because they feel themselves to be such. In what they say, either of their comforts or of their sorrows, sincerity dictates a simplicity which cannot be easily counterfeited! while they, whose tongues are not thus bridled, often betray themselves by an affectation and want of savour, even when they are lamenting their sinfulness, and the vileness of their hearts.

In what they say of or to others, the tongues of believers are bridled by a heart-felt regard to truth, love, and purity. It is grievous to see how nearly and readily some professors of religion will venture upon the borders of a lie; either to defend their own conduct, to avoid some inconvenience to procure a supposed advantage, or sometimes merely to embellish a story. Admitting the possibility of a sincere person being surprised into the declaration of an untruth, yet where instances of this kind are frequent, I hardly know a fouler blot in profession, or which can give a more just warrant to fear that such professors know nothing aright either of God or themselves. The Lord is a God of truth; and he teaches his servants to hate and abhor lying, and to speak the truth from their hearts. I may add likewise, with regard to promises and bargains, that though the law of the land requires, on many occa-

sions, oaths and bonds to secure their performance, that person, whose word may not be safely depended upon, without either bond or oath, scarcely deserves the name of Christian.

Where grace is in the heart, the tongue will be likewise bridled by the law of love. If we love our neighbour, can we lightly report evil of him, magnify his failings, or use provoking or insulting language? Love thinketh no evil, but beareth, hopeth, and endureth; and acts by the golden rule, to do unto others as we would they should do unto us. They who are under this influence will be gentle and compassionate, disposed to make the most favourable allowances, and of course their tongues will be restrained from the language of malevolence, harsh censure, and slander, though it be familiar to us as our mother tongue, till we are made partakers of the grace of God.

The tongue is also bridled by a regard to purity. Agreeably to the precepts, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient," Eph. iv. 26. v. 4. Grace has taught believers to hate these things; how then can their tongues speak of them? There are professors, indeed, who can suit their language to their company. When with the people of God, they can talk very seriously; and, at other times, be well pleased to join in vain, frothy, and evil conversation. But this double-mindedness is of itself sufficient to discredit all their pretences to a religious character.

Upon the whole, though perfection is not to be expected, though true believers, may on some occasions, speak rashly, and have great cause for humiliation, watchfulness, and prayer, with respect to the government of their tongues; yet I think the Scripture, and particularly the apostle James, in the passage I have mentioned, authorizes this conclusion, That if the tongue is frequently without a bridle; if it may be observed, that a person often speaks lightly of God and of divine things, proudly of himself, harshly of his fellow-creatures; if it can be affirmed, with truth, that he is a liar, a tale-bearer, a railer, a flatterer, or a jester;—then, whatever other good qualities he may seem to possess, his speech bewrayeth him: he deceiveth himself, his religion is vain. Let us think of these things, and entreat the Lord to cast the salt of his grace into the fountain of our hearts, that the streams of our conversation may be wholesome!

OMICRON.

PLINY TO THE EMPEROR TRAJAN.

It is a rule, Sir, which I inviolably observe, to refer myself to you in all my doubts; for who is more capable of removing my scruples, or informing my ignorance? Having never been present at any trials concerning those who profess Christianity, I am unacquainted not only with the nature of their crimes, or the measure of their punishment, but how far it is proper to enter into an examination concerning them. Whether, therefore, any difference is usually made with respect to the ages of the guilty, or no distinction is to be observed between the young and the adult; a latter repentance entitles them to a pardon; or if a man has been once a Christian, it avail nothing to desist from his error; whether the profession of Christianity, unattended with any criminal act, or only the crimes themselves, inherent in the profession, are punishable; in all these points I am greatly doubtful. In the mean while, the method I have observed towards those who have been brought before me as Christians, is this: I interrogated them whether they were Christians? if they confessed, I repeated the question twice again, adding threats at the same time; when, if they still persevered, I ordered them to be immediately punished; for I was persuaded, whatever the nature of their opinions might be, a contumacious and inflexible obstinacy, certainly deserved correction. There were others also brought before me, possessed of the same infatuation; but, being citizens of Rome, I directed them to be carried thither. But this crime spreading (as is usually the case) while it was actually under prosecution, several instances of the same nature occurred. An information was presented to me, without any name subscribed, containing a charge against several persons, who, upon examination, denied they were Christians, or had ever been so. They repeated, after me, an invocation to the gods; and offered religious rites, with wine and frankincense, before your statue, (which for the purpose I had ordered to be brought, together with those of the gods,) and even reviled the name of Christ; whereas there is no forcing, it is said, those who are REALLY Christians, into a compliance with any of these articles. I thought proper, therefore, to discharge them. Some among those who were accused by a witness in person, at first confessed themselves Christian, but immediately after denied it; whilst the rest owned, indeed, that they had been of that number formerly, but had now (some above three, others more, and a few above twenty years ago) forsaken the error. They all worshipped your statue, and the images of the gods, throwing out imprecations at the same time against the

name of Christ. They affirmed, the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they met on a certain stated day, before it was light, and addressed themselves in a form of prayer to Christ, as to some God; binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for the purpose of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery; never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust, when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then re-assemble, to eat in common, a harmless meal. From this custom, however, they desisted after the publication of my edict, by which according to your orders, I forbade the meeting of any assemblies. After receiving this account, I judged it so much the more necessary to endeavour to extort the real truth, by putting two female slaves to the torture, who were said to administer in their religious functions; but I could discover nothing more than an absurd and excessive superstition. I thought proper, therefore, to adjourn all further proceedings in this affair, in order to consult with you: for it appears to be a matter highly deserving your consideration; more especially as great numbers must be involved in the danger of these prosecutions, this inquiry having already extended, and being still likely to extend, to person of all ranks and ages, and even of both sexes. For this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only, but has spread its infection among the country villages: nevertheless, it still seems possible to remedy this evil, and restrain its progress. The temples, at least, which were almost deserted, begin now to be frequented; and the sacred solemnities, after a long intermission, are again revived; while there is a general demand for the victims, which for some time past have met with but few purchasers. From hence it is easy to imagine, what numbers might be reclaimed from this error, if a pardon were granted to those who shall repent.

REMARKS.

Several remarks easily offer from a perusal of this valuable monument of ecclesiastical antiquity, which I consider as affording us one of the most authentic testimonials of the natural tendency of genuine Christianity, and likewise a striking display of the unreasonableness and malignity of the spirit by which it was opposed, and by which it always will be opposed (so far as the providence of God and the circumstances of the times will permit it to act) while the state of the world and human nature continue as they are.

1. It appears, that the number of those who professed the Christian name, when Pliny was proconsul of Pontus and Bithy-

nia, and particularly within the extent of his government, was very great; so great that the heathen temples had been almost left desolate, and their sacrifices sunk into neglect. Pliny thought that such a general defection from the old religion rendered severities justifiable, and even necessary: yet, on the other hand, being a person of humanity, he was shocked and grieved when he reflected on the multitudes who were affected by such prosecutions, without distinction of rank, or age, or sex. Considering the many disadvantages to which the Christians had been exposed especially under the reigns of Nero and Domitian, their great increase at the time of Pliny's writing, (which, at the latest, could be but a few years after the commencement of the second century,) evidently proved that the propagation and maintenance of the Gospel is no way dependent upon the rank, titles, or acquired abilities of those who profess it: for, numerous as the Christians were, they were of so little note and esteem in the world, that Pliny, who was a scholar, a philosopher, and a gentleman, a curious inquirer into every thing that was thought worthy of being known, was wholly unacquainted with the Christians, till his office obliged him to procure some information concerning them. He had an extensive acquaintance in Rome, having been many years in public life, and the Christians were very numerous there; but he appears only to have known that there was such a people; and that they were a deluded contemptible people, who deserved all that they suffered, for their obstinacy. The very name of Christian was then odious and reproachful; and when in succeeding ages it became general and fashionable, other disgraceful epithets were substituted to stigmatize the faithful servants of God, and to point them out to the scorn or rage of the world.

II. Multitudes, who had been willing to be thought Christians in a time of peace, renounced their profession when they could no longer maintain it without the hazard of their lives. The terms of safety were, to invocate the gods, to offer wine and incense to the statue of the emperor, and to blaspheme Christ, which Pliny was rightly informed, no true Christian could be prevailed on to comply with: yet, in fact, when the persecution was sharp, so many yielded, that the cause seemed visibly to decline. The temples, which had been almost forsaken, were again frequented, the solemnities revived, and the demand for victims greatly increased. It is plain, therefore, that there were even in those primitive times, many superficial Christians, destitute of that faith and love which are necessary to perseverance in the face of dangers and death. Of course it is no new thing for men to desert the profession of the truth, to which they have formerly appeared to be attached, through the fear of man, or the love of the

world. These are the stony-ground hearers; and our Lord has assured us, that such would be found wherever his Gospel should be preached. But there were others, who, having experienced this Gospel to be the power of God unto salvation, were faithful witnesses, and could neither be intimidated nor flattered into a compliance with evil. It is the same at this day: for though we are mercifully exempted from the terror of penal laws, yet the temptations arising from worldly interest, and the prevalence and force of evil customs will, sooner or later, be too hard for all professors who have not received that faith which is of the operation of God, which, by communicating a sense of the constraining love of Christ, is alone able to purify the heart from selfish and sinful principles, and to overcome the world with all its allurements and threatenings.

III. We have, in this epistle, an honourable testimony to the conduct and practice of the Christians in Pliny's time. Though the information of enemies and apostates was admitted, and even sought for, and those who were inclined to speak in their favour were put to the torture, we see, that in the declaration of a heathen, nothing is laid to their charge which was in any degree deserving of just blame. Though their meetings were accounted an offence against the state, they are acquitted of any criminal transactions. On the contrary, it is said, that they bound themselves by the strictest obligations against the commission of immorality, and to the faithful discharge of relative duties. An engagement of this kind, amongst any other people, Pliny would have approved and admired. But the nature of their religious worship, which he censures as a dangerous and immoderate superstition, he thought sufficiently criminal in itself, notwithstanding its influence upon their conduct was confessedly commendable. To such inconsistencies are the wisest men reduced, who discover the least degree of candour in their opposition to the people of Christ. While they ignorantly condemn their principles, they are compelled to bear witness in favour of their general deportment, which is formed upon those principles, and which experience shows, no other principles can uniformly produce. It is true, the Christians were often indiscriminately charged with the greatest immoralities, but not by persons of reputation and judgment, like Pliny, who were careful to inquire into the truth of what they related. At present, we who know what foul aspersions are propagated against the despised professors of the Gospel, do not think it necessary to attempt a formal refutation of them; because, as we fear the authors of such slanders are incorrigible, so we are persuaded, with regard to others, that there are very few persons (however they may mistake our sentiments) so ignorant or credulous, as scarcely to think them worthy of credit.

IV. The object of divine worship, in their assemblies, was the Lord Jesus Christ. On a stated day, that is, on the day which upon this account has, from the apostles' time, been styled the Lord's day, they met early in the morning to sing hymns to his praise: not in commemoration of a mortal benefactor or lawgiver, but as to God, acknowledging, by this practice, their firm persuasion of that great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, and that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. That they met before it was light, was most probably to avoid the notice and fury of their persecutors. The enemies of Christ may put those who know and love him to many difficulties and inconveniences; but they cannot wholly prevent them from assembling in his name, unless they confine them in prisons or chains. The reason is, they honour him as God, and are assured that he is present where two or three are met in his name, at all times and in all places. Their dependence for support, direction, and deliverance, is entirely upon him; and when they worship him according to his will, he manifest himself unto them as he does not unto the world. This they believe, experience, and profess: and the hardships they will submit to, rather than be deprived of such opportunities, is a proof that they are not disappointed in their expectations from him; especially if it be considered, that there have been few ages in which a succession of his people have not been pressed with the like trials for adhering to him. But no power or policy could ever effectually prevent associations to honour and serve him, amongst those who were fully persuaded that he is their God and their Saviour. Bishop Bonner, (in queen Mary's reign,) who was better versed in the arts of persecution than in the history of the church, mistook these Christians, whom Pliny describes, for heretics, and charged Philpot with being altogether like them; a charge which the good man received as a great, though an undesigned honour.

V. The severity with which the persecution was carried on under Trajan, appears from the doubt proposed by Pliny, whether he was at liberty to make any allowance in particular cases, or must punish all alike who were guilty of bearing the Christian name, without paying the least regard to sex, age, rank, or circumstance. Though desirous to show lenity, he did not think himself authorised to reject the most invidious or private accusations; nor even to accept of a recantation without the emperor's express warrant. It is plain that he considered the mitigations he proposed, as a deviation from the ordinary course of proceeding against them. History scarcely affords an instance of such undistinguishing rage exerted against any people, upon any occasion, except against those who have been punished for righteousness' sake, though

they indeed have often been exposed to similar treatment both from heathens and professed Christians. In cases of sedition, or even rebellion against civil government, though many perhaps suffer, the greater number usually obtain mercy. The devouring sword of war seldom preys upon the defenceless, upon tender youth, or hoary age, or women. Some bounds are set by the feelings of humanity to the carnage of a field of battle: but when the native enmity of the heart, against those of whom the world is not worthy, is permitted to act without restraint, it acknowledges no distinctions, it feels no compassion, but, like the insatiable fire, consumes whatever it can reach. If there be some exceptions, a few persons of gentle natural dispositions, who are unwilling to shed blood, and rather express their dislike by a contemptuous pity—this is chiefly to be ascribed to the power of God over the heart of man; and he sometimes makes use of these to check the violence of the others. Such a one was Pliny; he had no esteem for the Christians, he despised them as deluded enthusiasts, and he was angry with them for what he deemed their obstinacy: yet the greatness of their sufferings, and the number of the sufferers, gave him some concern, and made him interpose in their favour, so far as to prevent them from being industriously sought out, or punished without witness or proof.

VI. The chief or only crime of the Christians, in the judgment of pliny, was, their steadiness in maintaining a cause which the emperor did not approve, and continuing their assemblies after they had been prohibited by his edict: for this audacity and presumption he supposed them deserving of the heaviest punishment, however blameless in other respects. It must be allowed, that, as the edicts of the Roman emperors had at that time the force of law, the profession of Christianity, when forbidden by those edicts, was illegal, and if the penalties they suffered were prescribed by the edict, and they were tried and condemned under the same forms as were usually observed in other criminal processes, they suffered according to law. Thus it appeared to Pliny; and though, in his private capacity, he might pity the offenders, yet, as a governor and a judge, he thought it his duty to give sentence according to the rule prescribed to him. At this distance of time, and while we keep in view that the persecutors were heathens, we can readily plead in behalf of the Christians. The obstinacy they were charged with, was no other than a commendable regard to the superior authority of God. In all things not inconsistent with their duty to their supreme Lord, they were peaceable and obedient subjects to the emperor; but, to countenance the worship of idols, to burn incense to the statue of a man, to abjure the name of Jesus, who had redeemed them from hell, or wilfully to

neglect his institutions; these things they could not do without sin, and therefore they chose to suffer. We approve their determination, and admire their constancy. But a question naturally arises upon this subject, namely, Whether God be the Lord of the conscience under a heathen government only? or whether any man, or set of men, who own the Christian name, can have a better right than Trajan had, to compel men to act contrary to the light of their minds, or to punish them for a refusal? As true Christians have always, by the influence of his grace, extorted from the more sober part of their adversaries, a confession in favour of their moral and peaceable conduct, they have been usually proceeded against upon the principle which influenced Pliny: not so much for the singularity of their religious tenets and usages, which are pretended to be so weak and absurd as to excite contempt rather than anger; but for their pertinacity in persisting to maintain them contrary to the laws and injunctions which have been contrived for their suppression. There have been men, in most ages of the church, whose ambition and thirst of power have been gratified by thus tyranizing over the consciences of their fellow-creatures, or (if they could not prevail over conscience) over their liberty, fortunes, and lives; and they have, by flattery or misrepresentation, had but too much success in engaging the authority of princes to support their designs. How many instances might we quote, from the history of kings and rulers, who, in other respects, have sought the welfare of their people, who yet being misled to esteem it a branch of their prerogative, to dictate in what manner God shall be worshipped, and what points shall be received as articles of faith, have crowded the annals of their reigns with misery, and have often, themselves, largely shared in the calamities which their ill-judged measures have brought upon their subjects! A uniformity of modes in religion has been enforced, as though it were the most desirable object of government; though it may be proved, that to prescribe, under the severest penalties, a uniformity of complexion or stature, would hardly be more unreasonable in itself, or more injurious to the peace and rights of society. Sometimes the servants of God have been traduced as persons disaffected to government, because they cannot adopt or approve such institutions as are directly subversive of the faith and obedience they owe to their Lord: thus the prophet was charged by Amaziah, the high-priest of Bethel, Amos, vii. 10. At other times, new laws have been enacted, purposely to ensnare or distress them. Thus, when the enemies of Daniel were convinced that they could find no occasion against him, except concerning the law of his God; by flattering the pride of Darius, they obtained a decree, which, according to their expectation,

gave him up into their power as a criminal against the state. May we be duly thankful to God, and to the government under which we live, for the valuable privilege of religious liberty; and that we can worship him according to the light of our consciences, and assemble together in his name where and when we please, none being permitted to make us afraid! OMICRON.

LETTER TO A YOUNG MINISTER.

On Preaching the Gospel with the Power and demonstration of the Spirit.

DEAR SIR,

I CONGRATULATE you on your ordination. The Lord has now, by his providence, opened to you a door into his vineyard, and has called you to a scene of service, in which I hope the abilities he has given you will be faithfully employed, and your desire of usefulness will be abundantly gratified. You now bear the high and honourable title of a minister of the Gospel: I call it high and honourable, because I am sure they who truly deserve it, will find it to be so at last; though at present perhaps they may meet with much opposition and contempt, for the sake of him whose they are, and whom they serve.

I wish you, upon your entrance into the ministry, to have a formed and determinate idea, what the phrase, *preaching the Gospel* properly signifies. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation; and this Gospel is preached when it is accompanied with some due degree of that demonstration and power from on high, which is necessary to bring it home to the hearts and consciences of the hearers. Thus the apostle Peter informs us, "that it was preached in the beginning with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven:" and Paul reminds the Thessalonians, "that they had received it not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." From these passages, I think we may warrantably conclude, that merely to *declare* the truth of the Gospel, is not to *preach* it. The knowledge of it as a system may be acquired, and of course recited by those who have no portion or tincture of that inward conviction of its important certainty, which is necessary to impress a correspondent conviction upon others. Though the Lord himself be the only effectual teacher, and that change of disposition which is frequently produced by the preaching of the Gospel, must be ascribed wholly to his agency; yet in the means he has instituted, and by which he has ordinarily pleased to work, we may observe a suitableness to the

nature of man, considered as a rational, intelligent creature, whose inward feelings are excited by external causes, in a manner agreeable to the general laws of his constitution in the present state. I may particularly notice, on this subject, the wonderful and well known effects of what we call *sympathy*, by which we often see the emotions of anger, pity, terror, and the like, with which one person is affected, when strongly expressed by his words or actions, suddenly and almost irresistibly awaken similar sensations in those who observe him. Many of the great truths of the Scripture may be represented by a man of a warm and lively imagination, in such a manner as to considerably affect the imaginations and natural passions of an audience, even though he should not himself believe a word of the subject. This would be an effect of no higher kind than is produced upon the stage. The exertions of a skilful actor first drawn forth by the sight of the spectators and a desire to please them, act upon them reciprocally, and give him an ascendancy over their feelings. When his attention seems to be fixed, when he appears to enter into the distresses of the character which he represents, he fixes their attention likewise, they also are distressed; and while he weeps or trembles, they weep or tremble with him, and though at the same time, both he and they are very sensible that the whole representation is a fiction, and consequently, when the play is finished the emotions cease. This is all very natural, and may easily be accounted for. It is not easy to account for the presumption of those preachers, who expect, (if they can indeed expect it,) merely by declaiming on Gospel subjects, to raise in their hearers those spiritual perceptions of humiliation, desire, love, joy, and peace, of which they have no impression on their own hearts. I premise, therefore, that there is one species of popularity which I hope will rather be the object of your dread than of your ambition. It is a poor affair to be a stage-player in divinity, to be able to hold a congregation by the ears, by furnishing them with an hour's amusement, if this be all. But the man who is what he professes to be, who knows what he speaks of, in whom the truth dwells and lives, who has not received the Gospel from books, or by hearers only, but in the school of the great Teacher, acquires a discernment, a taste, a tenderness, and a humility, which secure to him the approbation of the judicious, qualify him for the consolation of the distressed, and even so far open his way to the hearts of the prejudiced, that if they refuse to be persuaded, they are often convicted in their own consciences, and forced to feel that God is with the preacher. When Philip preached, the Eunuch rejoiced; when Paul preached, Felix trembled. The power of the truth was equally evident in both cases, though the effects were different. One criterion of the Gospel

ministry, when rightly dispensed, is, that it enters the recesses of the heart. The hearer is amazed to find that the preacher, who perhaps never saw him before, describes him to himself, as though he had lived long in the same house with him, and was acquainted with his conduct, his conversation, and even with his secret thoughts, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. Thus a single sentence frequently awakens a long train of recollection, removes scruples, satisfies doubts, and leads to the happiest consequences: and what we read of Nathaniel and the woman of Samaria, is still exemplified in the conversion of many; while others, who wilfully resist the evidence, and turn from the light, which forces itself upon their minds, are left without excuse. If, therefore, you wish to preach the Gospel with power, pray for a simple, humble spirit, that you may have no allowed end in view, but to proclaim the glory of the Lord whom you profess to serve, to do his will, and for his sake to be useful to the souls of men. Study the word of God, and the workings of your own heart, and avoid all those connexions, communications, and pursuits, which, experience will tell you, have a tendency to damp the energy, or to blunt the sensibility of your spirit. Thus shall you come forth as a scribe, well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, approved of God, acceptable to men, rightly dividing the word of truth. Thus your trumpet shall not give an uncertain sound, nor shall you appear like a cloud without water, to raise and disappoint the expectations of your hearers. A just confidence of the truths you speak, a sense of the importance of your message, a love to precious souls, and a perception of the divine presence, will give your discourses a solidity, a seriousness, a weight, which will impress a sympathetic feeling upon your hearers, and they will attend, as to one who speaks with spirit, demonstration, and power.

Allow me, before I conclude, to caution you against some too prevalent mistakes upon this subject. There are methods sometimes used to fix the attention of an audience, it is hoped, with a design to their benefit, which are very different from preaching with power, and seldom produce any lasting effect upon a sensible hearer, but an unfavourable idea of the preacher.

Beware of affecting the orator. I do not advise you to pay no regard to a just and proper elocution; it deserves your attention, and many a good sermon loses much of the effect it might otherwise produce, by an awkward and uncouth delivery. But let your elocution be natural. Despise the little arts by which men of little minds endeavour to set themselves off; they will blast your success, and expose you to contempt. The grand principle of Gospel oratory is simplicity. Affectation is displeasing in all persons, but in none is it so highly disgusting as in a preacher. A

studied attitude, a measured motion, a nice attention to cadences and pauses, a mimicry of theatrical action, may be passable in the recital of a school declamation, but is hateful in the pulpit. Men never do, never can, speak thus, when they speak from the emotion of their hearts. How is it possible, then, for a man who professes to speak for God, who addresses himself to immortal souls, who discourses upon the most important subjects, the love of Christ, the joys of heaven, or the terrors of the Lord; how is it possible for this man to find leisure or disposition for such pompous trifling, if he really understands and believes what he says? The truly pious will weep for his ill-timed vanity. And if any seem pleased, it is chiefly because this manner of preaching seldom disturbs the conscience, for it cannot be expected that God will vouchsafe the testimony of his Spirit, even to his own truths, when the poor worm who delivers them, is visibly more solicitous for the character of an eloquent speaker, than for the success of his message.

Sometimes *vociferation* seems to be considered as a mark of powerful preaching. But I believe a sermon that is loud and noisy from beginning to end, seldom produces much good effect. Here, again, my friend, if you are happily possessed of simplicity, it will be a good guide. It will help you to adjust your voice to the size of the place or congregation, and then to the variations of your subject. When the explanation of the text and the application of the sermon are both in the same boisterous tone, I am led to consider it rather as a proof of the want of power than otherwise. It seems impossible for a preacher to be equally affected in every part of his discourse, and therefore, if he appears to be so, his exertion, in some parts at least, must be constrained and artificial, and this thought will often bring a suspicion upon the whole; especially if his voice be as vehement in prayer as in preaching. We doubt not but if he were with the king, a certain composure and modesty of air, would indicate that he considered whom he was speaking to; and they who speak to God, would certainly give tokens of an awe upon their spirits if they really felt it; very loud speaking is far from being a token of such a frame. At the best, very loud preaching is the effect of a bad habit; and, though it may be practised by good men and good preachers, I am persuaded it is neither sign nor cause of the word being received with power by the hearers. People are seldom, if ever, stunned into the love of the truth.

There is another strain of preaching which, though it wears the garb of zeal, is seldom a proof of any power but the power of self. I mean angry and scolding preaching. The Gospel is a benevolent scheme, and whoever speaks in the power of it, will assuredly speak in love. In the most faithful rebukes of sin, in the most so-

lemn declarations of God's displeasure against it, a preacher may give evidence of a disposition of good-will and compassion to sinners, and assuredly will, if he speaks under the influence of the power of truth. If we can indulge invective and bitterness in the pulpit, we know not what spirit we are of; we are but gratifying our own evil tempers, under the pretence of a concern for the cause of God and truth. A preacher of this character, instead of resembling a priest bearing in his censer hallowed fire taken from God's altar, may be compared to the madman described in the Proverbs, who scattereth, at random, firebrands, and arrows, and death, and saith, Am not I in sport? Such persons may applaud their own faithfulness and courage, and think it a great attainment that they can so easily and constantly set their congregation at defiance; but they must not expect to be useful, so long as it remains a truth, that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

But the limits of a letter constrain me to stop here, only adding my prayers and best wishes for your comfort and success.

I am your sincere friend,

OMICRON.

QUESTION.

What are the most obvious Causes, Symptoms, and Effects of a Decline in the Spiritual Life.

Believers are, by nature, dead in trespasses and sins, even as others; but, by faith in the Son of God, they are made partakers of a new and endless life. They derive it from him; and he has said, "because I live ye shall live also." But the life of this life, if I may so speak, its manifestation and exercise, is subject to great changes. A sick man is still alive, but he has lost the cheerfulness, activity, and vigour, which he possessed while he was in health. There are many persons, who, if they be, as we would hope, really alive to God, are at least sick, languid, and in a declining state. May the great Physician restore them! It is sometimes said that the knowledge of a disease amounts to half a remedy; which will hold thus far in the present case, that unless we are sensible of our disorder and our danger, we shall not be heartily solicitous for a recovery.

The causes and symptoms, or effects of such a decline, are very numerous, nor is it always easy to distinguish them, for they have reciprocal influence to strengthen each other. What may be assigned as the cause, in many cases, is likewise a proof that the

plague is already begun ; and the effects may be considered as so many causes, which render the malady more confirmed, and more dangerous.

Among the many general causes, we may assign a principal place to error. I do not include every mistake or erroneous sentiment, which may be adopted or retained ; but there are some errors which, for the suddenness and violence of their operation, may be compared to poison. Thus the Galatians, by listening to false teachers, were seduced from the simplicity of the Gospel; the consequence was, that they quickly lost the blessedness they had once spoken of. Poison is seldom taken in the gross ; but, if mingled with food, the mischief is not suspected until it is discovered by the effect. Thus they who are unhappily employed in poisoning souls, generally make use of some important and salutary truth, as a vehicle by which they convey their malignant drug into the minds of the unwary. Perhaps they speak well of the person and atonement of Christ, or they exalt the riches and freedom of divine grace, while, under the veil of these fair pretences, they insinuate prejudices against the nature or necessity of that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Others speak strongly, in general terms, in favour of personal holiness ; but their aim is to withdraw the heart from a dependence upon the Saviour's blood, and the influences of his Holy Spirit, without which the most studied exactness of conduct differs no less from the holiness of the Gospel, than a picture or a statue, or a dead carcass, differs from a living man. Whoever is thus prevailed upon, in the great and essential points of Scriptural doctrine, to separate, in his judgment and experience, those things which God has joined together, is already infected with a disease in its own nature mortal, and his religion, unless the Lord mercifully interposes, will degenerate either into licentiousness or formality. We live in a day when too many are tossed to and fro, like ships without helm or pilot, by various winds of doctrine ; and therefore they who wish well to their own souls, cannot be too much upon their guard against that spirit of curiosity and adventure, which the apostle describes by the metaphor of having itching ears; a desire of hearing every novel and singular teacher, lest they imbibe errors before they are aware, and become a prey to the slight and craftiness of those who lie in weight to deceive.

Spiritual pride and self-complacence will likewise infallibly cause a declension in the divine life, though the mind may be preserved from the infection of doctrinal errors, and though the power of Gospel truth may for a time have been really experienced. If our attainments in knowledge and gifts, and even in grace, seduce us into a good opinion of ourselves, as if we were wise and good, we are already ensnared; in danger of falling every step we take;

of mistaking the right path, and proceeding from bad to worse, without a power of correcting or even discovering our deviations, unless and until the Lord mercifully interposes, by restoring us to a spirit of humility and dependence. For God, who giveth more grace to the humble, resisteth the proud; he beholds them with abhorrence, in proportion to the degree in which they admire themselves. It is the invariable law of his kingdom, that every one who exalteth himself shall be abased. True Christians, through the remaining evil of their hearts, and the subtle temptations of their enemy, are liable, not only to the workings of that pride which is common to our fallen nature, but to a certain kind of pride, which, though the most absurd and intolerable of any, can only be found among those who make profession of the Gospel. We have nothing but what we have received, and therefore to be proud of titles, wealth, or any temporal advantages, by which the providence of God has distinguished us, is sinful; but for those who confess themselves to be sinners, and therefore deserving of nothing but misery and wrath, to be proud of those peculiar blessings which are derived from the Gospel of his grace, is a wickedness of which even the fallen angels are not capable. The apostle Paul was so aware of his danger of being exalted above measure, through the abundant revelations and peculiar favours which the Lord had afforded him, that he says, "There *was given* me a messenger of Satan to buffet me." He speaks of this sharp dispensation as an additional mercy, because he saw it was necessary, and designed to keep him humble and attentive to his own weakness. Ministers who are honoured with singular abilities and success, have great need of watchfulness and prayer on this account. The Lord seeth not as man seeth. Simple hearted hearers are apt to admire their favourite preacher, and almost to consider him as something more than man in the pulpit; taking it for granted that he is deeply affected himself with the truths which, with so much apparent liberty and power, he proposes to them; while, perhaps, the poor worm is secretly indulging self-applause, and pleasing himself with the numbers and attention of those who hang upon his words. Perhaps such thoughts will occasionally rise in the minds of the best ministers; but if they are allowed, if they become habitual, and enter strongly into the idea he forms of his own character; and if, while he professes to preach Christ Jesus the Lord, he is preaching himself, and seeking his own glory, he is guilty of high treason against the Majesty of him in whose name he speaks. And sooner or later, the effects of his presumption will be visible and noticed. Errors in judgment, gross misconduct, an abatement of zeal, of gifts, of influence, are evils always to be dreaded, when spiritual pride has gained an ascendency, whether in public or in private life.

An inordinate desire and attachment to the things of the present world, may be assigned as a third prevailing cause of a religious declension. Unless this evil principle be mortified in its root, by the doctrine of the cross, it will, in time prevail over the most splendid profession. That love of the world, which is inconsistent with the true love of God, manifests itself in two different ways, as men by temper and habit, are differently disposed. The first is covetousness, or greediness of gain. This was the ruin of Judas, and probably the cause of the defection of Demas. By the honourable mention made of him in some of St. Paul's epistles, he seems to have had much of his confidence and esteem for a season. Yet at length his ruling passion prevailed, and the last account we have of him from the apostle, is, "Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world." Again, there are persons not chargeable with the love of money for its own sake, for they rather squander than hoard it, who are equally under the power of a worldly spirit, and equally discover it by an expensive taste in the articles of dress, furniture, and feasting, often unsuitable to their circumstances, and always to their profession. It is not easy exactly to mark out the line of conduct in these respects, which becomes the different situations in which the providence of God has placed us: nor is it necessary, to those who are upright in heart. A simple desire of pleasing God, and adorning the Gospel, will preclude many cases of minute casuistry, which occupy little and trifling minds. Inclination will always direct and regulate our voluntary expenses. They who love the Lord, and whose spirits are lively in his service, will avoid both parsimony and profusion; but they will rather lean to the frugal side in what concerns themselves, that they may be better able to promote his cause, and to relieve the necessitous for his sake. Others, who can be content with a name to live, with the form of religion, will lay up all they can save to gratify their avarice, or lay out all they can spare to gratify their vanity or their appetites. The miser laments that, in this declining day, many professors of the Gospel can hardly be distinguished, either at home or abroad, from the people of the world. The luxurious professor is concerned to see some persons, who would be deemed Christians, so penurious that, though known to be rich, they live below their ranks, and can scarcely allow themselves the decent conveniences of life. And so far they are both right; but it would be better for both if each could be sensible of his own mistake. It is not easy to determine which of these evils is the greatest. Perhaps of the two, the miser is the least accessible to conviction, and consequently the most difficult to be reclaimed; but a turn for parade and indulgence, if persisted in, will gradually lead to

such compliances with the spirit and maxims of the world, as will certainly weaken, if not wholly suppress, the exercise of vital religion. In whatever degree the love of the world prevails, the health of the soul will proportionably decline.

Many other causes might be enumerated, but most of them may be reduced to the heads I have already mentioned. The practice of a single sin, or the omission of a single duty, if allowed against the light of conscience, and, if habitual, will be sufficient to keep the soul weak, unfruitful, and uncomfortable, and lay it open to the impression of every surrounding temptation. Sometimes unfaithfulness to light already received, perverts the judgment, and then errors which seem to afford some countenance or plea for a sin which the heart will not give up, are readily embraced, to evade the remonstrances of conscience. At other times errors, incautiously admitted, imperceptibly weaken the sense of duty, and by degrees spread their influences over the whole conduct. Faith and a good conscience are frequently mentioned together by the apostle, for they are inseparable; to part with one is to part with both. They who hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience, shall be preserved in a thriving frame of spirit; they shall grow in grace, go on from strength to strength, shall walk honourably and comfortably. But so far as the doctrines or the rules of the Gospel are neglected, a wasting sickness will prey upon the vitals of religion, a sickness in its nature mortal, and from which none recover but those on whom God mercifully bestows the grace of repentance unto life.

The symptoms of such a sickness are very numerous and diversified, as tempers and situations vary. A few of those which are more generally apparent, and sure indications of a decline in religion, are the following.

Bodily sickness is usually attended with loss of appetite, inactivity, and restlessness; so the sickness of the soul deprives it of rest and peace, causes a dulness and indolence in the service of God, and an indisposition to the means of grace, to secret waiting upon God, and to the public ordinances. These appointments, so necessary to preserve spiritual health, are either gradually neglected and given up, or the attendance upon them dwindles into a mere formal round, without relish and without benefit. To the healthy man, plain food is savoury, but the palate, when vitiated by sickness, becomes nice and fastidious and hankers after varieties and delicacies, when the sincere milk of the Gospel, plain truth, delivered in plain words, is no longer pleasing, but a person requires curious speculations, or the frothy eloquence of man's wisdom, to engage his attention, it is a bad sign. For these are suited to nourish, not the constitution, but the disease.

From slighting or trifling with those means which God has provided to satisfy the soul, the next step usually is to seek relief from a compliance with the spirit, customs, and amusements of the world. And these compliances, when once allowed, will soon be defended; and they who cannot approve or imitate such conformity, will be represented as under the influence of a narrow, legal, or pharisaical spirit. The sick professor is in a delirium, which prevents him from feeling his disease, and he rather supposes the alteration in his conduct is owing to an increase of wisdom, light, and liberty. He considers the time when he was more strict and circumspect, as a time of ignorance; will smile at the recollection of what he now deems his childish scruples, and congratulates himself that he has happily outgrown them, and now finds that the services of God and the world are not so incompatible as he once thought them to be.

Yet while he thus relaxes the rule of his own conduct, he is a critically severe observer of the behaviour of others. He sharply censures the miscarriages, and even the mistakes of ministers and professors, if an occasion offers, and speaks of these things, not weeping, as the apostle did, but with pleasure, and labours to persuade himself that the strictness so much talked of, is either a cloke of hypocrisy, or the fruit of superstition, and that because some do deviate from this acknowledged rule of duty, therefore at the bottom, and if they could be detected, they would be found to be nearly all alike. True Christians seldom meet with more uncandid misconstruction, or undeserved reproach, than from those who having been once their companions, afterwards desert them.

When the disorder is at this height, it is truly dangerous, and, indeed, as to any human help, desperate. But power belongeth to God. May it please him to remember in mercy those who are near unto death, to restore them to their right minds, and to recover them to himself. Otherwise, "it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

OMICRON.

ON DREAMING.

DEAR MADAM,

I THANK you for your obliging letter, and would be thankful to the Lord, that you and all your family are well.

Surely never dog dreamed so opportunely and a-propos as your Chloe. I should be half angry with her, if I believed she

knew your intentions of writing upon the subject, and wilfully dropt asleep in the very nick of time, out of mere spite to my hypothesis, and purposely to furnish you with the most plausible objection against it. I admit the probability of Chloe dreaming; nay, I allow it to be possible that she might dream of pursuing a hare; for though I suppose such an amusement never entered into the head of a dog of her breed when awake, yet as I find my own powers and capacities, when sleeping, much more enlarged and diversified than at other times, (so that I can then fill up the characters of a prime minister, or a general, or twenty other great offices, with no small propriety; for which, except when dreaming, I am more unfit than Chloe is to catch a hare,) her faculties may perhaps be equally heightened in her way, by foreign assistance, as I conceive my own to be. But you beg the question, if you determine that Chloe's dreams are produced by mere animal nature. Perhaps you think it impossible that invisible agents should stoop so low as to influence the imagination of a dog. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the laws and ranks of being, in that world, fully to remove the difficulty. But allow it possible for a moment, that there are several such agents, and then suppose that one of them, to gratify a king of Prussia's ambition, causes him to dream that he has over-run Bohemia, desolated Austria, and laid Vienna in ashes, and that another should, on the same night, condescened to treat Chloe with the chase, and a hare at the end of it, do not you think the latter would be as well and as honourably employed as the former?

But as I have not time to write a long letter, I send you a book, in which you will find a scheme, not very unlike my own, illustrated and defended with much learning and ingenuity. I hope the Greek and Latin quotations will not discourage you from *reading* it. Your brother will tell you the meaning of them, if you have not made those languages a part of your acquisitions. I have some hope of making you a convert to my sentiments; for though I own they are liable to objection, yet I think you *must* have surmounted greater difficulties, before you thought so favourably of the sympathetic attraction between the spirits of distant friends. Perhaps distance may be necessary to give scope to the force of the attraction; and therefore to object that this sympathy is not perceived between friends in the same house, or in the same room, may be nothing to the purpose.

I seldom fill up so much of a letter in a ludicrous way. I cannot call it a ludicrous subject, for to me it appears very striking and solemn. The agency of spirits is real, though mysterious; and were our eyes open to perceive it, I believe we should hardly be able to attend to any thing else, but it is wisely and mercifully

hidden from us. This we know, that they are all under the direction and control of him who was crucified for us; his name is a strong tower, and under the shadow of his wings we have nothing to fear. I hope in those hours when you find most liberty with him, you sometimes think of me and mine. I am &c.

OMICRON.

ON READING THE BIBLE.

DEAR MADAM,

I AM further to thank you for your letter of the 23d of last month. The subject of my former, to which it principally relates, needs no further prosecution, as you express yourself satisfied with what I offered in answer to your question. I would therefore now offer something a little different. But the points of experimental religion are so nearly related, and so readily run into each other, that I cannot promise, at this distance of time, to avoid all repetition. Indeed, the truths essential to the peace of our souls are so simple, and may be reduced to so few heads, that while each of them singly may furnish a volume drawn out at length, they may all be comprised in a small compass. Books and letters written in a proper spirit, may, if the Lord is pleased to smile upon them, have their use; but an awakened mind that thirsts after the Saviour, and seeks wisdom by reading and praying over the Scripture, has little occasion for a library of human writings. The Bible is the fountain from whence every stream that deserves our notice is drawn; and though we may occasionally pay some attention to the streams, we have personally an equal right with others to apply immediately to the fountain-head, and draw the water of life for ourselves. The purest streams are not wholly freed from the *gout de terroir—a tang of the soil* through which they run; a mixture of human infirmity is inseparable from the best human composition; but in the fountain the truth is unmixed.

Again, men teach us by many words; and if they would give us their full views of a subject, require us to read a whole volume, the life and substance of which is perhaps expressed with greater force and greater advantage in the Scripture by a single sentence, which is rather diluted than explained by our feeble expositions. A volume may be easily written upon the grace of humility, and to show the evil and folly of a self-seeking spirit. But if the author should introduce his subject with our Saviour's words, "Even the Son of man came not into the world to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for

many;" whoever was duly impressed with that short introduction, would have no great occasion to read the rest of the book.

The preaching of the gospel being an instituted means of grace, ought to be thankfully and frequently improved. And books that have a savour and unction, may likewise be helpful, provided we read them with caution, compare them with Scripture; and do not give ourselves implicitly to the rules or decisions of any man or set of men, but remember that one is our Master and infallible Teacher, even Christ. But the chief and grand means of edification, without which all other helps will disappoint us, and prove like clouds without water, are the Bible and prayer, the word of grace and the throne of grace. A frequent perusal of the Bible will give us an enlarged and comprehensive view of the whole of religion, its origin, nature, genius, and tendency; and preserve us from an over-attachment to any system of man's compilation. The fault of the several systems, under which, as under so many banners, the different denominations of Christians are ranged, is, that there is usually something left out which ought to have been taken in, and something admitted, of supposed advantage, not authorized by the Scriptural standard. A Bible-christian, therefore, will see much to approve in a variety of forms and parties; the providence of God may lead or fix him in a more immediate connexion with some one of them, but his spirit and affection will not be confined within these narrow enclosures. He insensibly borrows and unites that which is excellent in each, perhaps without knowing how far he agrees with them, because he finds all in the written word.

I know not a better rule of reading the Scripture than to read it through from beginning to end; and when we have finished it once, to begin it again. We shall meet with many passages which we can make little improvement of, but not so many in the second reading as in the first, and fewer in the third than in the second: provided we pray to him who has the keys to open our understandings, and to anoint our eyes with his spiritual ointment. The course of reading to-day will prepare some lights for what we shall read to-morrow, and throw a further light upon what we read yesterday. Experience only can prove the advantage of this method, if steadily persevered in. To make a few efforts and then give over, is like making a few steps and then standing still, which would do little towards completing a long journey. But though a person walked slowly, and but a little way in a day, if he walked every day, and with his face always in the same direction, year after year, he might, in time, encompass the globe. By thus travelling patiently and steadily through the Scripture, and repeating our progress, we should increase in knowledge to the end of life. The Old and New Testament, the doctrines, precepts, and promi-

ses, the history, the examples, admonitions, and warnings, &c. would mutually illustrate and strengthen each other, and nothing that is written for our instruction will be overlooked. Happy should I be, could I fully follow the advice I am now offering to you! I wish you may profit by my experience. Alas! how much time have I lost and wasted, which, had I been wise, I should have devoted to reading and studying the Bible! but my evil heart obstructs the dictates of my judgment. I often feel a reluctance to read this book of books, and a disposition to hew out broken cisterns which afford me no water, while the fountain of living waters are close within my reach.

I am, Madam, yours, &c.

OMICRON.

PLAIN TESTS OF TRUE DOCTRINE.

Dear Sir,

I do not wonder that your mind is unsettled and uneasy. When you had derived peace and composure from the knowledge of the truth, it was not worth your while to consult the writers you mention, to know what they could offer in support of opinions which you were beforehand, upon solid grounds, convinced must be erroneous. Unless we have a clear and proper call to examine such books, I think it best to let them alone. A man, who, relying on the strength of his constitution, should tamper with poison, may be hurt before he is aware. There are some errors which, for the subtlety and malignity of their operation, may be compared to poison. And if we presume so far upon our judgment being fully formed and established, as to suppose we may indulge a needless curiosity of knowing the mistakes of others, and how they attempt to defend them, without the least danger of being entangled or perplexed ourselves, we may have cause to repent of our rashness. You have made the experiment, and suffered by it. You have found there is something in your heart which you did not expect to find there, and which, if God were to leave you to yourself, would render you, notwithstanding all your former apparent stability, capable of believing a lie.

The advocates for that false candour which is so much in vogue at present, will recommend to you a liberal and impartial examination of every sentiment on religion, which may come in your way; and that you should not reject any one, however it may shock you upon the first proposal, until you have heard and considered all that can be suggested in its favour. They will probably remind you, that to prove all things, in order to hold fast that which is

good, is the direction of an apostle. But you had already proved, if not all things, yet many, enough at least, to give you a warrant for holding that fast which had evidenced itself to you, by its effects, to be good. May I not ask you, as Paul asked the Galatians, Where is the blessedness you once spoke of? Nay, I need not ask you; I well know, and I appeal to your own conscience, that in proportion as the principles which formerly made you happy, have been shaken by the suggestions of your new teachers, the blessedness you then spoke of has abated likewise. I long for the honour and comfort of being instrumental to your recovery, and with this view take up my pen. There are some truths so evident, that they are scarcely capable of additional proof, nor should we think it worth while to waste a moment in confuting the person who should deny them. I am sure, beyond a doubt, that two and two are equal to four. And if the title page of a large book informed me that the design of the author was to prove that two and two are equal to seven; whatever reason I might have to think highly of the author's abilities, or to be diffident of my own judgment, I need not toil through a folio, and carefully weigh every thing his learning and ingenuity could suggest in support of an absurdity, before I could warrantably contradict it.

I think an evidence, little less intuitive than that by which we perceive the whole to be greater than a part, may be obtained, with respect both to the truth of the leading doctrines of the Gospel, and their true sense, provided their understanding be duly enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and the heart be humbly and honestly willing to be determined by the testimony of Scripture. Universal experience and observation so perfectly correspond with what the Bible teaches us concerning the heart of man, his present state, his weakness and wants, his anxieties and miseries, with their proper causes, and their only remedy; that he who runs may read, if his judgment be not perverted by prejudices and pride. Indeed, if he idolizes what he calls his reason, and resolves to believe nothing but what he can fully comprehend; if, while he admits a Divine Revelation, he neither expects nor will allow it to inform him of any thing but what he supposes he already knows; the more he reasons, the more he is likely to be bewildered in the labyrinths of scepticism. Yet reason has its use and place in religious concerns; and the religion of the New Testament is a reasonable service. But the reasoning of many persons reputed wise, is like the reasoning of madmen. Their inferences may be rightly drawn, and, therefore, if their premises were true, their conclusions would be just. But if the premises be false, the conclusion must be so likewise. The man who thinks he is made of glass, and is therefore afraid of moving or being touched, lest he

should be broken to pieces, may be said, so far, to reason justly; for if he really was made of glass, his fear would be well founded; but if he insists upon it, in defiance of all argument and persuasion, that he is really a glass man, we no longer deem him rational, but pronounce him to be mad. Thus, if a reasoner, in contradiction to the common sense of mankind, will assume the dignity, the wisdom, the integrity, and the goodness of man in his present state, as so many incontrovertible first principles; if he reasons consistently from such principles, he must, of course, first undervalue, and finally discard, the revelation which he proposes to examine. For madness is in his heart, and unless it pleases God to bring him to his right mind, he is no more competent to judge of truth, than a man born blind to judge of colours.

Is it not highly reasonable to affirm, that God knows us better than we know ourselves? That what he says deserves our attention? That what he promises must be worth our while to seek in the way which He has appointed? Let reason work fairly upon these plain data, and it will confirm all that the Scripture declares concerning the guilt and depravity of man, and of the method of his recovery by faith in the blood of Jesus. That fallen man needs a Saviour; that his salvation is a work too great for a creature to accomplish; that he cannot be saved without a proper atonement made for his sin; nor unless his mind be enlightened, and renewed, by the powerful agency of the Holy Spirit. These points, reason, though unable to discover, or fully to comprehend, can so far demonstrate, as to prove the impossibility of salvation upon any other grounds, if the Scriptural representation of the character of God and the heart of man be admitted as a true one.

Yet these points are not only disputed, but denied, and, by some persons, in the most unqualified terms. The epithets, irrational, absurd, and enthusiastic, are freely applied both to the doctrines and to those who hold them; and the magisterial and decisive tone, in which these charges are made, has supplied the want of solid argument in their support. I do not wonder that sentiments so favourable to the pride of man, and which lay but little restraint upon his inclinations, should be readily adopted by many, who are content to let others think for them. But I marvel that you are so soon removed from the truth you professed, to another Gospel. Yet I hope you are not removed, though for the present unsettled; and that the Lord will so humble and instruct you by your fall, as to make it the occasion of establishing you more firmly than ever. I wave argumentation, and appeal to facts; and I shall confine myself to the consideration of a single point, because it is the central point, which has an influence upon every other religious sentiment. You once believed that Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, possesses all the attributes and perfections of

Deity, that he ever was, and ever will be, the proper object of divine worship; but now you hesitate; your attention has been drawn to what is commended to you as a more rational scheme. But they who are agreed to deny the eternal power and Godhead of the Lord Jesus, cannot agree among themselves who, or what He is. Some peremptorily affirm that he is a mere man, like one of us; others suppose him to be of the angelic order, perhaps of the highest rank, possibly superior to them all, but yet a creature, consequently no more worthy of divine honour (and in my view no more competent to the work of redemption) than a worm. If you read on both sides, you will find that the Arian and Socinian writers, abundantly prove that the sentiments which they gently oppose in each other, cannot be reconciled either with Scripture, or with plain common sense. But their opposition is so very gentle, their reciprocal candour and esteem so great, and their mutual dislike of our principles so very sincere and strong, that it seems, upon their plans, to be of little importance, what or how we think of Christ, provided we do not think of him too highly; but let us judge from what we see and feel, and decide accordingly.

1. The truth or falsehood of our religious principles may not be easily discernible, by their effects in a time of prosperity. The house built upon sand, may seem to stand as firm as that which is built upon the rock, till the floods and storms come to try them. But man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards. Admitting that the schemes which represent Christ as a creature, whose knowledge and power must of course be limited, may seem to suit and satisfy those who are at ease; they afford little consolation to a wounded conscience, or even to a person suffering under the various calamities to which every state of human life is liable, under the pressures of poverty, severe pain, and long illness; or when the desire of our eyes is taken away by a sudden stroke; in cases where the help of man is found to be utterly in vain, there is a need of stronger arguments than the topics of what some call rational religion can suggest, to inspire peace, maintain hope, and influence the mind to a cheerful and willing submission to the will of God. Natural fortitude, and cold reasonings, more conformable to the philosophy of the heathens, than to the spirit of the Gospel, may stifle complaints; but to rejoice in tribulation, and in every thing to give thanks, are privileges peculiar to those who can joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom they have obtained reconciliation. A cordial belief that he suffered for our sins, that we are accepted in him, that he is our shepherd, full of care, compassion, and power; who knows the very thoughts and feelings of the heart, and who, having been tempted for us, is able and ready to succour us in all our temptations: a persuasion

that his wisdom and love preside over all our dispensations; a liberty of applying to him for strength according to our day, confirmed by a thousand past proofs, that when we have called upon him, he has heard, supported, and delivered us; a humble confidence, which only he can give, that the heaviest afflictions are light, and the longest momentary, compared with that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, to which he is leading us by them; and that sense of the demerit of our sins, only fully to be estimated by the value of the necessary atonement, which will always constrain us to acknowledge that our greatest sufferings are less than our iniquities deserve. Considerations of this kind come home to our bosoms, are fully adequate to our wants, communicate a peace passing understanding, and enable those who feel their influence, to say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good;" and often they can add, to the astonishment of those who know not the power of their principles, As the sufferings of Christ (those which we endure for his sake or from his hand) abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

2. This reminds me of another important point. If there be an hereafter; if every one of us must give an account of himself to God, and be unalterably fixed in a state of happiness or misery, according to his righteous award, a thinking person who professes to believe that he must appear at the tribunal of the great, impartial, omniscient Judge, can hardly have any true enjoyment of his situation here, but in proportion as he is favoured with a well-grounded hope, (for a false and ill-grounded hope, where such vast consequences are depending, must be an awful delusion indeed,) that it will be well with him when he shall go hence and be no more seen. Certainty upon this head, or the nearest possible approaches to certainty, must surely be highly desirable. Let us inquire which scheme bids fairest to afford this satisfaction. If well-grounded, it must be built upon truth, and consequently it cannot be stronger than the conviction we have, that the principles are true upon which we build.

An ingenious writer* of the present day, though he thinks the Socinian doctrine "not only renders the Scripture UNINTELLIGIBLE, but Christianity itself INCREDIBLE," is pleased, notwithstanding, to give it a marked preference to what he styles the Athanasian or Calvinistic scheme, which, he says, "I reject with strong conviction." But in the same page, in the very next preceding period, he frankly acknowledges, "I can, in this instance, as in most others, with much more confidence say what is NOT, than what IS the truth."† It may perhaps be justly questioned whether a man who declares himself

* Price. † Sermon's lately printed, p. 158, 198.

uncertain what is the truth, can be competently qualified to decide with confidence, what is not the truth. He elsewhere says to the same purpose, "Indeed, I seldom feel much of that satisfaction which some derive from being sure they have found out truth." In another publication, he gives the following account of his studies, and the result of his inquiries: "In early life, I was struck with Bishop Butler's Analogy of Religion, natural and revealed, to the constitution and course of nature. I reckon it happy for me, that this book was one of the first that fell into my hands; it taught me the proper mode of reasoning on moral and religious subjects, and particularly the importance of paying a due regard to the imperfection of human knowledge. His sermons also, I thought, and do still think, excellent. Next to his works, I have always been an admirer of the works of Dr. Clarke. And I cannot help adding, though it may seem strange, that I likewise owe much to the philosophical writings of Mr. Hume, which I likewise studied in early life. Though an enemy to his scepticism, I have profited by it. By attacking, with great ability, every principle of truth and reason, he taught me to examine the ground on which I stood, and not hastily to take any thing for granted. And now, in the evening of a life devoted to inquiries, and spent in endeavours (weak and feeble indeed) to serve the best interests, present and future, of mankind; I am waiting for the great Teacher, convinced that the order of nature is perfect, that infinite wisdom and goodness governs all things, and that Christianity comes from God; but at the same time, puzzled by many difficulties, anxious for more light, and resting with full and constant assurance only on this one truth, That the practice of virtue is the duty and dignity of man, and, in all events, his wisest and safest course."*

I admire the ingeniousness of these confessions; and I compassionate a state of mind which, though seldom acknowledged with the same honesty, I believe to be far from uncommon. It is indeed lamentable, if persons of respectable characters and abilities, should devote no small part of their time and attention to the study of the Scriptures, the professed design of which is to make us wise unto salvation, and yet have no hope of being satisfied in the most fundamental points of religion, till death shall remove them to a state which will exclude all possibility of doubt. For though death be a great teacher indeed, it must be uncomfortable to remain in suspense, and under a possibility of being mistaken in matters essential to our peace, till the discovery of our mistake (if it should prove so) will come too late to admit of redress. Oh that we may be persuaded in time, earnestly to implore the assist-

* Matty's Review for December, 1784, page 487.

ance of that still greater Teacher, who has promised his gracious help to all who humbly seek it! But if we set him aside, and rashly prefer the guidance of our own boasted reason, in points beyond the line of its comprehension, the most laborious researches will issue in uncertainty. Surely in the beginning it was not so. Our Lord's promise to his disciples was, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." And these promises were abundantly fulfilled to the first Christians. Not to insist on the strong testimony of Peter, "We believe, and are sure, that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" the apostles frequently declare, that their aim and intention, both in preaching and writing, was to make others equally sure with themselves; "These things we write unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe in the name of the Son of God." It was not the exclusive privilege of Paul, as an apostle, to know whom he had believed, and to be persuaded that he was able to keep that which he had committed to him. The Gospel came to others likewise, not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; they had joy and peace in believing; they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory; they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and more enduring substance; for, after they believed, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, and because they were sons, God had "sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, whereby they could call him "Abba, Father." These are Scriptural expressions, and but a very small part of what might be adduced to confirm, were it needful, the assertion of St. John, "He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself." How different is this strain from that of the writer I have quoted above! Shall we say, then, that the everlasting gospel has lost its evidence, or its efficacy, in the course of seventeen hundred years? That it could once inspire those who embraced it with a full assurance of hope; but, at this distance of time it leaves inquirers puzzled with difficulties, and still more anxious for light? Rather, we must maintain, that the same Gospel still produces the same effects. If Christ died, rose from the dead, and entered into glory, only to assure us "that the practice of virtue is the duty and dignity of man, and at all events his safest and wisest course," I may venture to say, that he died and rose in vain. Surely, his gracious interposition does not make it more evident to us, than it was to the heathens, that nothing but the practice of virtue is necessary for a sinner. And I am quite at a loss to know what the

writer means by virtue, when I find a bold attempt to set aside the authority of Moses and Paul, complimented by him as "a magnanimous openness."* Methinks a magnanimity of this kind can be no branch of that virtue which is the duty and dignity of man.

Ask death-beds, my friends, they will speak; I know, indeed, that many persons die as they lived, careless and insensible, no more impressed by the thoughts of an eternal state, than the beasts of the field; and I know that others, lest by-standers should suspect them of fear, or question the validity of their infidel principles to support them, have affected to jest in their last hours, and to meet death with a facetiousness utterly unbecoming a wise man. For it is a serious thing to die; and the dignified composure of a true Christian differs so much from the levity of a buffoon, as the sober conduct of a man differs from the mimickry and grimace of a monkey. I have known persons, not in the lowest class for that wisdom and virtue which is taught in the schools of scepticism, tremble like the boughs of a tree in a storm, when the approach of death has excited an awful sensibility in their conscience, recalled to their remembrance a view of their past lives, and opened to their mind a prospect (till then unregarded) of what was before them. I have had the comfort of seeing many others very differently affected in dying circumstances. I have seen enough to convince me, if the testimony of the word of God needed any confirmation, that the true wisdom of Man is most conspicuous (if he retains his senses) when he is about to leave this world; and that his duty, dignity, and happiness, are displayed to the highest advantage, when, like Stephen, he is enabled to commit his departing spirit into the hands of Jesus, and to venture his Eternal All upon his faithfulness and ability to save, to the uttermost, those who, renouncing every other ground of hope, confide entirely in his mediation. I have seen them in this situation, in the exercise of a good conscience, possessed of a solid, unshaken peace, and at a loss for words to express their joys, yet humbly sensible of their unworthiness, and the defects and defilements of their best services. I have heard them regret, that their regard to him, and their dependence upon him, had been so faint and so feeble; but I never heard one regret that he had honoured him too highly, or placed too much confidence in his authority and power.

3. Another test of the truth and goodness of doctrines, which will approve itself, to a careful and candid observer, without the assistance of critical learning, or laboured arguments, is their comparative efficacy or insufficiency, to reclaim men from wickedness, to inspire them with the fear and love of God, and to produce a habit of integrity and benevolence towards our fellow-creatures. If I hear that a minister, who preaches Christ as the wisdom and

* Appendix to the Sermons, p. 394.

power of God to salvation, and who is animated with that zeal for the glory of God, and the good of souls, of which they who truly believe in the eternal power and Godhead of the Saviour, and the value of his atonement, cannot be wholly destitute; I say, if I hear that such a one is about to be fixed in a place where ignorance and immorality generally prevail, I always take it for granted that the effects of his ministry will soon be more or less visible; that the Lord's day will be better observed, the place of worship more frequented; that there will be some instances, at least, of profligates becoming sober, of careless sinners excited to a concern for their souls, and that some persons who had long lived without God in the world, will begin to worship him in their families. I know that in such cases there will be pretenders found, like tares among the wheat; but I always expect there will likewise be such instances of real reformation, both as to religion and to moral conduct, as shall put gainsayers to shame and to silence, and satisfy candid and attentive inquirers, that a change so beneficial to individuals, to families, and to the community, was the effect of the doctrines delivered to them, and with which they were before unacquainted. The very different effects of that preaching which represents Christ as a creature, and sets aside the necessity of his atonement, I have often had the occasion of observing, when introduced amongst a people who have before been favoured with what I deem, and assuredly know, to be the true Gospel. In proportion as it has been received, a regular attendance upon public ordinances, a care to maintain family worship, a spiritual frame of conversation and conduct, have gradually declined. Where moral essays are substituted for the truth as it is in Jesus, where men are taught to seek their resources in their own power, and to consider themselves as already wise and good, the preacher may perhaps please the ear, but he will seldom affect or mend the heart. In our days it may be truly said, "Virtus laudatur et alget." Fine encomiums upon the beauty of virtue abound; but Christian virtue, the love of God, and of man for his sake, is only to be attained by faith in the blood of the Lamb, and the word of his testimony.

Since, therefore, the principles you once embraced are best suited to comfort you under affliction, to give you a solid ground of hope in life and in death, and evidently found to be the most efficacious to promote the fear of God, and the good of society; I hope you will in future beware of the sophistry of those teachers who would deprive you of your gold, and can only give you counters in exchange. I commend you to that good Shepherd, who can pity and restore his wandering sheep;

And remain affectionately yours,

OMICRON.

TO MISS **** ****, ON HER BIRTH-DAY

1.

With sweet song, the lark and thrush,
On the day when you were born,
From the dew-bespangled bush,
Welcom'd in the happy morn.
Still, with each returning Spring,
As the day returns they sing.

2.

What a cheering soft perfume,
Wafted on the air, proceeds
From the hedges drest in bloom,
And the gay, enamell'd meads,
While the sun, with pencil'd beams,
Gilds the hills, the trees, the streams!

3.

Yet, before another year,
(Pleasures are short-liv'd below,)
Frowning winter will be here,
Rob'd in clouds, and storms, and snow;
All these beauties then will fade,
All look blasted, cold, and dead.

4.

Spring an emblem is of youth,
Hasting on to with'ring age;
Oh that this important truth
Might each youthful heart engage!
Ev'ry pulse, and ev'ry breath,
Nearer brings our winter, Death.

5.

You, I trust, delight to think
On the change which many dread;
Here you taste, but there shall drink
Pleasures at the fountain head.
Has not Jesus, by his love,
Taught your heart to soar above!

6.

Endless spring will there prevail,
There the flow'rs unfading grow;
Solid joys that never fail,
How unlike to all below!
Grief and sin will then be o'er,
And our sun go down no more.

7

You may well record your birth,
Born to such a glorious bliss;
All the kingdoms of the earth
Are but toys compar'd with this.
'Tis not worth the while to live
For such joys as earth can give.

8

Saviour! till her life shall end,
Guide her steps, and cheer her heart!
Be her shepherd, husband, friend,
Daily grace and peace impart;
May her bright example show
What a *Saviour's love can do!*

OMICRON.

EXTRACTED FROM

THE

EVANGELICAL MAGAZINE.

THOUGHTS ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY.

I BELIEVE that there are beings superior to us, at least in our present state, whom we call angels. But what I can collect from the Scriptures concerning their nature and powers, is very indistinct. I never saw an angel, and therefore am at a loss how to conceive of him. How poor, then, must be my conceptions of the great God! The revelation he has given of himself in his Word, is undoubtedly fully adequate to the state and wants of mankind; but it can be rightly understood so far only as it is accompanied by the further revelation of his Holy Spirit. And as the knowledge of believers is progressive, like the light which advances from dawn to day, I hardly expect that any human form of words can equally and exactly express the apprehensions, even of all who are truly taught of God. A child may repeat such a form no less accurately than a man, but he will seldom annex the same ideas to what he says. There are likewise children, yea, babes in grace. All may be equally orthodox, but I think they cannot all be equally enlightened.

For myself, though I trust the views I have received exempt me from the charge of worshipping I know not what, I am sensible I have not "already attained." My conceptions are weak and faint; and such as they are, I know not how to express them to others to my own satisfaction. I dare not indulge speculations upon this high subject; and when I speak of it, I wish to speak with reverence and caution, lest I should darken counsel by words without knowledge.

The principal effects attributed to faith are, that it purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world. I think that no other cause can produce these effects. Therefore, when I perceive these signs of faith, I am ready to take it for granted that the principles of the persons who exhibit them are right; though they may, and I suppose they do, perceive them more or less explicitly, according to the will of Him who worketh all in all, or to the different stages of their standing or experience in the divine life. To judge otherwise, appears to me as unreasonable as to expect that

several persons viewing the same tower from different distances, should all perceive it precisely under the same angle.

I believe there is a God. That God is *one*, I am assured not only by Scripture, but even by reason. I see enough around me, to be convinced that he is the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things. I see the traces and impressions of his wisdom, power, and goodness, wherever I turn my eyes. But the solitary idea of God, absolutely considered, would bring no comfort to my heart. Too long, while I said there was a God, I lived without him in the world; and I should have always lived so, had not my eyes been in some degree opened, to see him by the light of his Scripture. *There*, besides strong declarations of the unity of the Godhead, and repeated warnings against idolatry, I meet with the terms, Father, Son, or Word, (of God,) and Holy Spirit. Whether men style *these*, persons, subsistences, or by any other name, I find ascribed to each those attributes which I judge incommunicable to creatures, as much so to those of the highest order, as to worms or oysters; such as omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence. Therefore, whether I attempt to think of Father, or Son, or Holy Spirit, I think of God, and yet I am sure there can be but one God.

I read in the Gospel of St. John, that the Word was God, that all things were made, or created by him in the beginning. This, therefore, is a fundamental article of my faith. I am told, by the same authority, that the Word was *with* God. I conceive that this clause, likewise, has its determinate meaning. It teaches me to attend to the above distinction; but I think it does not require me either to comprehend or to explain it. I observe a distribution pointed out in the economy of redemption; that the *purpose* is more peculiarly ascribed to the Father, the *accomplishment* to the Son, and the *application* to the Holy Ghost. But as these offices and engagements can only be sustained or fulfilled by the perfections of Deity; and as God is essentially and immutably *one*, I hope that whether I bow my knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whether I pray to the Saviour himself, or implore the Holy Spirit for his gracious light and influence, I still worship the same one God.

I sometimes hear of Sabellians, but I know not well who they are. I have been told the Moravians, or United Brethren, are Sabellians; what they once were, I cannot say; I judge of them at present by their late publication, entitled, in Latin, *Idea Fidei*, in English, *an Exposition of Doctrine*. If the word Sabellian imports any thing unscriptural or dangerous, I hope, for my own sake, (according to this book,) they do not deserve to be branded with it. For I am free to confess, that of all the systems of divinity I am acquainted with, none seems, in the main, to accord more

with my sentiments, and particularly in what relates to the Trinity, than the Brethren's Exposition of Doctrine.

But I apprehend that some good men, though not in their judgment and experience, yet in their more general manner of expression, seem to border upon another extreme, for though they profess to believe, and I doubt not, cordially do believe, the deity of the Saviour, they do not seem to speak of him with that freedom, frequency, and fervency, of which the apostle Paul has given us such a pattern in his writings. I have heard excellent sermons, evidently upon Gospel principles, and well adapted to general edification, in which I could perceive but one defect, (and I must think it a defect,) that the name of Jesus Christ the Lord has hardly been mentioned, but only the word *God*, which has, perhaps, been so often repeated, as to sound in my ears almost like an expletive. On the other hand, I have known some ministers suspected of Sabellianism, for often addressing their prayers, directly and immediately, to the Lord Jesus.

For my own part, if the one be three, and the three one, as I believe, I am not afraid that there is a jealousy in the Godhead, lest one person should be overrated, or too much admired and adored, to the disadvantage of the others. Rather, I read, it is the will of the Father that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. I endeavour to honour the Father by prayer, by praise, by entrusting and surrendering my all to him; by obedience, and proclaiming the glory of his character. The same honour I owe, and endeavour to pay, to the Son, and, by parity of reason, to the Holy Spirit.

If the Lord Jesus be verily, and indeed God over all, blessed for ever, how can I possibly think or speak of him too highly; or pray to him, or praise him too often? The question, how far, and when, we may warrantably pray to him, seems to me the same as to ask, how far, and when, we may warrantably pray to God?

I think the glory and grace of God can only be duly perceived, at least by us sinners, in the person of Jesus Christ. His meditation, though it derives its efficacy from his divine nature, is performed in the human. With regard to this office, I consider him as the way to God, the mercy-seat, the throne of grace. But I consider his human nature, likewise, as the temple in which the fulness of God substantially dwells. In prayer, as I am differently led, I come to God by Christ, or I come to God in Christ. In both I think I have scriptural precepts, promises, and precedents for my warrant.

Bishop Bonner ignorantly charged Philpot that he was like the ancient heretics mentioned by Pliny. These heretics were the primitive Christians; and Pliny tells us that they assembled together, to worship Christ as God. May such heresy ever be my privilege, and my glory!

I have observed, that in revivals of religion, the word *Lord* has generally become more in use and repute than at other times. I admire this word. We have none that can better answer the Hebrew word Jehovah, and it is likewise the peculiar name by which the apostles speak of the Redeemer. He is Lord of all. Yet the Father and the Holy Spirit are frequently spoken of by the same title.

Dr. Owen, in his Christiologia, states, that the more general object of prayers in the New Testament is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he afterwards points out some especial seasons in a believer's experience, in which, he thinks, it may be helpful to faith, to address prayer more immediately and directly to the Saviour. Perhaps many of the Lord's people feel themselves always in one or other of those situations which the Doctor deems peculiar and occasional. But he has omitted one case, which I think well worthy of mention. I think the Lord Christ is he with whom we, who have the honour to be ministers of the Gospel, more especially have to do. Is he not the head of the church? Do we not hope that we have received our designation from him? Is it not *his* flock we are engaged to feed? To whom should we, like the apostle, report our discouragements, or success, what we have taught, and what we have done? On whom are we to depend that his grace may be sufficient for us, to enable us for service, or to support us under temptations? What is the grand, the inexhaustible subject of our ministry? Whom are we to preach? Christ, and him crucified! Christ Jesus the Lord! from whom, as the great and righteous Judge, we hope to receive the crown of life, which he has promised to all who love his appearance.

I grieve to think how often I have amused myself and my hearers (I fear it has been little more) with making grave remarks upon sin or holiness, which, though I hope, true in themselves, and important in their proper places, have, by the length of my proofs, reasonings, and illustrations, tended to hide the Saviour from our view. I have since compared this mistake to that of a painter, who, in a historical piece should omit the principal figure. I have thought it like an attempt to point out the most striking parts of an extensive prospect at midnight. In future, I wish, when I preach, (if I may so speak,) to keep the sun in view above the horizon. Then I may hope that He will be seen by his own light, and will likewise diffuse a light upon every part of my subject.

That there is an injudicious, improper way of preaching Christ, and dwelling and chiming upon the name of Jesus, as though the sound of it could work like a charm, I readily admit. But I be-

lieve the most judicious preacher, if faithful, if warmly conscious of the Saviour's just right to appear glorious in every eye, and precious to every heart, will not escape censure, from fastidious, superficial, and incompetent hearers. They will allow us to speak of God in general terms, but they will not be pleased with hearing too much of Christ. His name is of small value with the careless, and those who are at ease; it is designed for the relief of the weak, the wounded, the helpless, and the miserable; and they who truly know him, and have experienced his saving power, will be ready to speak of his name (if they could speak Latin) in the words of Austin, that it is "Mel in ore, melos in aure, medicina in corded."

To draw to a close:—If the Lord shall be pleased to give me clearer and deeper views of this point than I have as yet attained, I believe it must be not by investigation on my part, but by a manifestation on his part. I cannot, by searching, find out God. Nor am I ambitious of that moon-light knowledge, which chiefly qualifies for framing distinctions, and weighing words and phrases. The only knowledge I think worth praying for, is that which, while it enlightens, exhilarates, animates, and sanctifies the heart: such as the good woman had, who told her persecutors, when they would have disputed with her, "I cannot *talk* for Christ, but I can *burn* for him."

I conclude with my sincere and earnest prayers for myself and my readers, in the words of the apostle, "That Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God!" OMICRON.

A LETTER TO A YOUNG WOMAN.

My Dear Miss ——,

I thank you for your letter, and for your kind sympathy with me; but I am not much to be pitied. My trial, if I may call it one, has been very light, and sweetened with innumerable comforts and mercies. I fell in the street, not down stairs; but I strained my instep a good deal, and was confined to the sofa for near a fortnight. Last Sunday I was enabled to mount the pulpit, and I am now returning into the old track; but I cannot yet walk in the street, because I cannot wear my own shoe. I trust, in the Lord's good time, I shall recover my former liberty:

and till his time comes, which is always the best, I hope I shall not desire it. I felt little pain, except for about half an hour after my fall. Perhaps my confinement may have kept me from some greater harm.

The text of my first sermon on my return to church was suggested by my own case: John, v. 14. Methinks it is applicable to you likewise. You have been sick, nigh unto death, but the Lord has raised you up; may he enable you to consider sin as the source and cause of every sorrow; and that the afflictions the Lord sends, however trying to the flesh, are light, compared with what sin deserves; and designed, if rightly improved, to prevent still worse things which may come upon us, if we despise the chastening of the Lord. It is my heart's desire for you, that you may not only say with gratitude, He hath healed all my sicknesses, but be able to add, He has pardoned all my sin.

An accomplished and well-behaved young woman is an amiable object in the sight of her fellow-creatures. She may be sensible and obliging; she may dress and dance genteelly; she may play well upon the harpsichord; she may have much finer work to show than the coats and garments which Dorcas made; and, by her vivacity and good humour, she may become the idol of all her acquaintance: but if she does not know her state as a sinner; if she admires herself, and is pleased with the admiration of others, while her heart is cold to the love and glory of God our Saviour; if she has no taste for prayer or praise; if her mind is engrossed by the pleasures and prospects of this poor world: she is dead while she liveth. In the sight of God, her Maker, she is insensible and ungrateful; she is poor, blind, and miserable.

When you were a child I could observe in you, not only the sprightliness common to children, but indications of sense and mental powers above the common standard. Could I see you now, I think I should see you greatly improved. Your person, I suppose, is formed, your education finished, and your powers expanded. Happy you, if with these advantages you should be led to devote yourself to the Lord in early life. Then he will guide and bless you, and make you a blessing in all your connexions. You will live honourably and usefully, and die, whether sooner or later, comfortably. You will have a double relish for every temporal comfort, because you will see his hand providing and bestowing it; and in times of trouble, which you will surely meet with, you will have a refuge a hiding-place, a present and effectual helper, when the help of man would be utterly in vain.

But unless you enter the narrow way by the strait gate, all your talents and accomplishments will be snares to your feet, and

thorns in your eyes. Though the world, at first, may appear like a beautiful palace, or a pleasant garden, it is enchanted ground, it is all illusion; and when, at last, the charm is broken, you will find yourself in a desolate wilderness. May the Lord preserve you from those awful disappointments, and bitter reflections, which are the inevitable consequences of living without God in the world!

Shall I advise you to change your own heart, to make yourself (what you must be if ever you are a Christian indeed) a new creature? This would be no less vain, than if I advised you to fly in the air, or to touch the stars with your finger. Yet there is something within the reach of your ability, and which, if you neglect, the fault will be properly *your own*. This is, the use of what we call the means of grace. The promise of God has connected the appointed means and the promised end, so certainly that no one, who carefully attends to the former, can possibly fail of attaining the latter: and no one, to whom the Lord's word of salvation is sent, shall finally miss of happiness, unless the appointed means of attaining it are wilfully neglected. You can read; the Bible is in your hands; read it, therefore, attentively; by it God speaks to you, and he deserves to be heard. Your heart tells you, that he ought to be worshipped. Let this conviction engage you to pray, and especially pray for the teaching of his Holy Spirit, to enlighten your mind to see and understand the great things of his Word. Reverence his sabbaths, and public worship. Where two or three are met in his name, he has said, I am in the midst of them. Prize the preaching of the Gospel when you can have it, for, ordinarily, faith cometh by hearing. If you persevere in this way, you shall find that he is able and willing to do that for you which you cannot possibly do for yourself.

I commend you to the care and blessing of the Lord. I hope you will always believe me to be

Your affectionate friend.

J. NEWTON.

MEMORABLE CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE LIFE OF THE LATE MR. RICCALTOUN.

To the Editor of the Evangelical Magazine.

SIR,

SOME months ago I met with the words of Robert Riccaltoun, late minister of Hobkirk, in Scotland. I am not in the hab-

it of recommending books. Some sentiments of this author appeared to me rather singular; but his originality, genius, and force as a writer, engaged my attention. And though I do not think myself bound to plead for every thing he has advanced, I readily acknowledge myself a debtor to him, as an instrument, for a more enlarged view of some truths, which have been long dear to my heart.

I found, upon inquiry, that it was a posthumous publication, and, though printed long since, (the last volume in the year 1772,) there were few persons within the circle of my acquaintance who had either seen it or heard of it. A considerable part of the edition remained unsold, and almost forgotten; and I was told that the editor, the Rev. John Riccaltoun, the author's son, and successor in the charge of the parish of Hobkirk, was a considerable loser by the impression.

A friend of mine in Edinburgh, wrote to Mr. Riccaltoun, at my instance, requesting some information concerning his father, who, I judged from his writings, must have been a very considerable man. My friend transcribed a copy of the letter he received from Mr. Riccaltoun. If you think proper to insert the annexed abstract of the most interesting particulars of this account in your Magazine, it is at your service. Perhaps it may not be unacceptable to some of your readers.

Mr. Robert Riccaltoun was born (I am not told where) in the year 1691. Some indications of the genius which he afterwards displayed, appeared in early life. He could read the Bible distinctly before he was five years of age. His father, who was a substantial tenant, probably had a design of educating this his only son, with a view to the ministry. He was placed in the grammar school at Jedburgh, where he made a rapid progress in learning. He could write and speak in Latin with the same ease and readiness as in English. From thence he was removed to Edinburgh, attended the university, and became a proficient in all the various branches of literature. About the time he had finished his course in the college, his father died, and left him in the possession of a very good farm. He then seemed resolved to follow the farming business, and therefore did not attend the Divinity Hall. However, he studied the Holy Scriptures with great diligence, before he attained the age of twenty, and formed to himself a system of what he called Bible Divinity, from which he never departed through life, though he doubtless acquired clearer and more distinct views as he advanced in years: and he became so possessed of his system of biblical knowledge, that he could, without difficulty, preach a lecture upon any portion of Scripture,

without premoditation, when he was afterwards called to it in the course of divine Providence.

The Presbytery of Kelso, in whose bounds he resided, had such a high opinion of his abilities, and of his knowledge in divinity, that they, in a manner, forced him upon trials. They wrote his circular letters without his consent, and at length prevailed on him to comply with their wishes. In a year or two after he became a preacher, (when about the age of twenty-four,) he published what he called, *The Sober Inquiry*, which had the good effect of putting an end to a dispute, warmly carried on for a considerable time, between two parties of the most eminent men in the church of Scotland.

He was much esteemed by many of his contemporary ministers. My information particularly mentions four by name, as his inmates; the late Alexander Calder, of Oxman; Thomas Boston, of Etterich; Henry Davidson, of Gallasheils; and Gabriel Wilson, of Maxton.

In the life of Mr. Thomson, (author of the Seasons,) there is an acknowledgment of his obligations to Mr. Riccaltoun, who was himself likewise a poet. And his son's letter informs me, that some of his father's poems were published under Mr. Thomson's name. He mentions one piece of his in particular, entitled, The Description of a Winter Blast, upon which Mr. Thomson founded his Winter.

Mr. Riccaltoun met with one great trial, which brought him into very straitened circumstances through the remainder of his days. But he did not regret it. His son has often heard him say, that it was the very best dispensation that could have befallen him; as he thought, that if he had not been so borne down, his spirit might have been very haughty and overbearing.

A Mr. H——, a preacher, and a farmer, who married Mr. Riccaltoun's wife's sister, had borrowed large sums of money from different persons, and persuaded Mr. Riccaltoun that he had sufficient funds to pay off all his debts, provided he could get in his own money; and assigned some plausible reasons why he could not call it in for some time. It is not difficult to deceive a young man, unpractised in the world, and who possesses an upright mind, and a warm, benevolent heart. Thus he was drawn in to bind himself for a large sum, expecting, as he was promised, to be soon released. But not long after, Mr. H. obtained a church in Shetland, and then it appeared that he had no money to call in. Of course the creditors came upon Mr. Riccaltoun; and at once tore from him every penny that his father had left him, to the amount of above 800*l.*; nor did that suffice to clear him. He was some years assistant to Mr. Deans, of Bowden, before he was settled at Hobkirk, and still harrassed with the payment of Mr. H's debts.

After living 15 or 16 years at Hobkirk, he was involved in new distress, by opposing the settlement of a minister, patronized and presented by a nobleman, contrary to the inclinations of the parish. He thought the people's cause a just one; and therefore saw it his duty to support them with all the strength of argument he was able. But he suffered severely for it. Mr. H. had been the nobleman's tenant, and one of the sums for which Mr. Riccaltoun was bound, was for the arrears of his rent. This bond was brought against him, for principal and interest, to the amount of 300*l.* and he would certainly have been thrown into prison, if a friend had not advanced the money; for the payment of which he assigned one half of his stipend, yearly. But he was obliged to contract debts for the support of his family.

I sympathize with his son, while I transcribe the period which concludes this relation: "At my father's death, as I was bound with him to many of his creditors, I became liable to his debts, which has kept me under water ever since. But the cause was good, and I have struggled cheerfully. But now I almost despair of being clear, (though it is brought within 100*l.*) as I have seven children to maintain and educate, which, with the most frugal management, will exhaust the whole of my stipend."

Perhaps this little history may engage the notice of some persons, able and willing to assist him. I shall be sorry if a deserving son of such a father does not obtain relief in his exigency.

They who are competent judges of the late Mr. Riccaltoun's writings, will perhaps wonder, as I do, that a man so circumstanced for a course of many years, should be able to write with that apparent composure, and peculiar energy of thought and manner, which seem to require a state of mind and situation perfectly at ease. But the paper before me affirms, that none of his most intimate friends ever heard him repine. The whole of his conduct manifested a serenity of spirit, and an habitual cheerful resignation to the will of God:—a striking proof of the faithfulness of Him, who has said, As thy day is, so shall thy strength be!

He was a very studious man, and when thinking closely upon any subject, or even if writing, the various conversation of others in the same room gave him no disturbance. Yet he was a very cheerful, agreeable companion, and always happy in company, where the conversation was instructive and sensible. He was especially pleased with the company of young people; and they who had access to know him, were so warmly attached to him, that even reproof, when necessary, was thankfully received when it came from him. And few men made greater allowances for the foibles of youth, than he. He was an affectionate husband and parent, a warm and sincere friend.

He was taken suddenly ill, during divine service, in the forenoon of a Lord's day, and desired a young man, who was frequently with him, to preach for him in the afternoon. His complaint terminated in a total suppression of urine. He continued in exquisite pain till about the middle of the week; from that time he seemed to be quite at ease; but as he never spoke after, the cause of the transition from so much pain to sudden ease remained unknown. He breathed strong and full through his nose, for the last three days of his life, without once opening his lips. But his countenance discovered an animated serenity, which was much noticed by those who saw him. He breathed his last, without the smallest convulsive motions, on the evening of the following Lord's day, in the latter end of September, 1769, in the 78th year of his age.

The controversy, which, it seems, subsided when his *Sober Inquiry* appeared, was occasioned by the publication of a book, entitled, The Marrow of Modern Divinity. I have not seen his Sober Inquiry; but I have in my possession his answers to Mr. Sandiman, who had animadverted upon Mr. Harvey's Theron and Aspasio, in two volumes, 12mo. under the signature of Palemon.

My paper contradicts a report, that the late Rev. Mr. Walker, of Edinburgh, had made many alterations in the third volume of Mr. Riccaltoun's works, (containing Notes and Observations on the epistle to the Galatians,) and declares that Mr. Walker neither made, nor proposed any alterations; but only corrected the proof sheets.

I am, Sir, yours,

OMICRON.

Jan. 31, 1795.

ON FEMALE DRESS.

Women who profess godliness, and who have the care of young persons of their own sex, are perhaps in no point more blameable, than in the example which some of them set, and the liberty which perhaps a greater number allow, of undue conformity to the world, in the article of dress. Few ministers touch upon this subject in their public discourses; and indeed it is not very easy to treat it with propriety from the pulpit. Yet whatever is unsuitable to the Christian profession, an inlet to temptation, and productive of evil consequences, should, in some way or other, be noticed by those who have the honour of the Gospel, and the welfare of their fellow-creatures at heart. I make no further apology for offering a few hints, which I hope will not give offence, and which I pray, so far

as they are agreeable to the Holy Scripture, and confirmed by experience and observation, may be attended to.

I doubt not but many parents who desire to see their children brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, give them many excellent lessons in the nursery. They endeavour to impress their tender minds with a sense of their sinful state by nature, of the evil of pride, and of the vanity of the world. But when their children begin to appear in public view, for want of due reflection, or resolution, or both, they either encourage, or at least permit them, to form habits which have a direct tendency to counteract all the benefits which might otherwise be hoped for from the instruction of their early years.

I am certainly no connoisseur in the article of dress; but I know how I am affected by what I see: and I can hear what other people say. The *simplex munditiis* of Horace, which may be translated, an *unaffected neatness*, according to different situations in life, seems a tolerable definition of a becoming dress.

But *Christian* women should aim to comply with the apostle's advice, to adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety. When he adds, "Not with gold, or pearls, or costly array," I do not think it necessary to take this restriction so rigidly, as to affirm, that such ornaments are, universally and without exception, unlawful. I think this is one of the many expressions in Scripture which are to be understood in a comparative sense. Thus, when our Lord declares, "That unless a man hate parents, wife, children, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple;" we are sure he does not contradict, what by his authority is expressly enjoined in many other passages, that we should pay a due regard to our relations, and take a proper care of ourselves. He only teaches us, that whenever our dearest temporal concernments stand in competition with what we owe to Him, they must be given up and renounced.

The providence of God has made an evident distinction of rank and subordination in civil life. There is a long gradation from the highest state of those whom we call the rich, to the lowest state of the honest and industrious poor. It is to be hoped that some of his own dear people may be found in all these different conditions. And I see no impropriety in paying some regard to them in dress. At present, however, through the dissipation and extravagance of the times, the proper distinction is almost wholly lost, and it is often not easy to distinguish (except perhaps in the article of Jewels) between a countess and a milliner.

If clothes are considered merely as a covering for the body, and a defence from the cold, it will be difficult to draw the line, and to determine exactly between what is necessary and what is superfluous. I think some women may as lawfully wear satins

and pearls, as others may wear stuffs and glass beads; and it is more for the honour of the Gospel, that a woman professing godliness should be distinguished from others, by modesty, sobriety, and good works, than by the shape of her cap, or the colour of her garment.

Yet even to ladies of the greatest affluence, who love and fear the Lord, I will venture to suggest a word of caution. To you I say nothing of the expense; you can, as the phrase is, very well afford it. And if in other respects you are generous and bountiful, ready to distribute, and willing to communicate, the cost of what you choose to wear is of no great consideration. But a nice attention to dress will cost you much of what is more valuable than money—your precious time. It will too much occupy your thoughts, and that at the seasons when you would wish to have them otherwise engaged. And it certainly administers fuel to that latent fire of pride and vanity, which is inseparable from our fallen nature, and is easily blown up into a blaze. I hope you will not be among the first of those who are eager to catch at, and give sanction to every new mode; nor is it necessary, if the mode be decent and general, that you should be the very last to adopt it. But something there should be in your exterior, to indicate, that though you do not affect a needless and scornful singularity, (which is often the source of censoriousness and envy,) yet your heart is not set upon these little things. If a woman, when going to public worship, looks in the glass, and contemplates, with a secret self-complacence, the figure which it reflects to her view, I am afraid she is not in the frame of spirit most suitable for one who is about to cry for mercy as a miserable sinner.

There are likewise women, who, we would hope, are pious, and therefore, of course, benevolent. But an attachment to dress, and a desire to approach, as near as they can, to the standard of those who are their superiors in fortune, blunt their compassionate feelings, and deprive them of the usefulness, comfort, and honour they might otherwise attain. The expense of their dress is so great, compared with the smallness of their income, that when they have decorated themselves to their mind, they have little or nothing to spare for the relief of the poor. I doubt not, but they take it for granted, that, upon the supposition that our Lord and Saviour was again upon earth in a state of poverty and humiliation, as when he walked in the streets of Jerusalem, and they knew that he wanted a garment, when they were about to spend their spare money in some useless piece of finery, they would gladly forego their purpose for the honour of assisting him. But the heart is deceitful. If we live in the neglect of present duty, we have no right to suppose we should act better in different circumstances. He has said, "Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these

my brethren, ye did it unto me." And if we are inattentive to the wants of those whom he appoints to be his representatives, we cannot be sure that we should be properly attentive to himself, if he was with us in person, and in a low, obscure condition.

But I am not so much hurt by observing the materials, as by the manner of female dress; by what we call the fashion, and the eagerness with which every changing fashion, however improper, is adopted by persons whose religious profession might lead us to hope they had no leisure to attend to such trifles. If some allowance is to be made for youth on this head, it is painful to see mothers, and possibly sometimes grandmothers, who seem, by the gaudiness and levity of their attire, very unwilling to be sensible that they are growing older.

It may be a sufficient censure of some fashions, to say they are ridiculous. Their chief effect is to disfigure the female form. And perhaps the inventors of them had no worse design, than to make a trial, how far they could lead the passive, unthinking many in the path of absurdity. Some fashions, which seem to have been at first designed to hide a personal deformity, have obtained a general prevalence with those who had no such deformity to hide. We are informed, that Alexander had a wry neck, and therefore his courtiers carried their heads on one side, that they might appear to be in the king's fashion. We smile at this servility, in people who lived in Macedonia twenty centuries before we were born; yet it is little less general among ourselves in the present day.

Other fashions were doubtless contrived by persons who, having not yet attained to glory in their shame, were desirous of concealing it as much, and as long, as possible. Yet these, likewise, are no less eagerly adopted. If I did not consider the tyranny of fashion, my compassionate feelings would often be excited for women who I should suppose were married, if I did not observe the wedding finger destitute of a ring. These improprieties are not simply ridiculous. They are serious evils, in a religious view; and, to speak of them in the gentlest terms, they are signs of a careless, inconsiderate spirit, very unsuitable to a professed regard to the Gospel. We are required to attend to the things that are lovely and of good report. Every wilful deviation from this rule is sinful. Why should a godly woman, or one who wishes to be thought so, make herself ridiculous, or hazard a suspicion of her character, to please and imitate an ungodly world?

But the worst of all the fashions are those which are evidently calculated to allure the eyes, and to draw the attention of our sex. Is it not strange that modest and even pious women, should be

seduced into a compliance even with these? Yet I have sometimes been in company with ladies of whose modesty I have no doubt, and of whose piety I entertain a good hope, when I have been embarrassed and at a loss which way to look. They are indeed, noticed by the men, but not to their honour or advantage. The manner of their dress gives encouragement to vile and insidious men, and exposes them to dangerous temptations. This inconsiderate levity has often proved the first step into the road that leads to misery and ruin. They are pleased with the flattery of the worthless, and go on without thought, "as a bird hastens to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for its life." But honest and sensible men regard their exterior as a warning signal, not to choose a companion for life from among persons of this light and volatile turn of mind.

How far does the richest dress which studious vanity can procure from the spoils of birds, beasts, and insects, fall short of the delicate texture, and elegance, and the beautiful tints, which we admire in a flower or a butterfly! "Even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these!" The resemblance is chiefly in the frailty of the wearer. Soon, and perhaps suddenly, the body, now adorned with so much nicety and care, must be deposited in the vault or grave, and be food for worms.

An attention to ornament and dress is peculiarly unseasonable at present. The dark aspect of the times rather requires a spirit of humiliation and abasement. The judgments of God are abroad, his hand is lifted up. We know not what is before us, but we have reason to fear awful tokens of his displeasure for our national sins. Perhaps the day is coming when the words of the prophet, "Tremble, ye women that are at ease, be afflicted ye careless ones," may be no less applicable to us, than they were to the Israelites of old. I earnestly request my fair readers carefully to peruse the latter part of the third chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, from the sixteenth verse to the end. OMICRON.

ON RELIGIOUS FEASTING.

Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Cor. x. 31.

A SINNER, considered as such, is not only destitute and incapable of spiritual blessings, but has forfeited all right to the comforts, and even the necessaries of the present life. It is of mere mercy that he is permitted to breathe the air, or walk upon the

ground.—But Jesus, the Saviour, has not only brought life and immortality to light, and opened the kingdom of Heaven to all who believe in his name; but he has removed, in their favour, the curse which sin had entailed upon the lower creation. And now, to them, every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if received with thankfulness and moderation; for all is sanctified to their use by the word of God in prayer. But these, which, in distinction from the communications of his grace, we call common mercies, are equally derived from his bounty, and the effects of his mediation.

"He sunk beneath our heavy woes,
"To raise us to a throne;
"There's not a gift his hand bestows,
"But cost his heart a groan."

We are therefore bound by gratitude, as well in the ordinary actions of life, as in those of the most importance, whether we eat or drink, to do all with a regard to his love, and with a view to his glory.

It is to be feared that this apostolic rule is too much disregarded by many professors of the Gospel. However they may seem to differ from the world, by a stated and orderly attendance upon the ordinances, they are not easily distinguished upon many other occasions; particularly at their meals. The people of the world can scarcely exceed them in the cost, care, profusion, and variety with which their tables are covered. I am willing to allow some regard to a person's situation in life; but perhaps the excess is more frequently observable among people in trade, or, as we say, in middling circumstances, than at the tables of the opulent. A friend of mine, since deceased, told me that when he was a young man, he once dined with the late Dr. Butler, at that time bishop of Durham; and though the guest was a man of fortune, and the interview by appointment, the provision was no more than a joint of meat and a pudding. The bishop apologized for his plain fare by saying, "that it was his way of living; that he had been long disgusted with the fashionable expense of time and money in entertainments, and was determined that it should receive no countenance from his example." The economy of this truly venerable prelate was not the effect of parsimony; for I have been assured, that though he was sometime possessed of the princely revenue of Durham, he might be said to die poor, leaving little more money than was necessary to discharge his debts, and pay for his funeral. But we may accommodate to him, what the apostles said of themselves on another occasion, "He did not think it meet to leave the word of God, *and to serve tables.*" And at the

tables of some gentlemen of very respectable characters and affluent fortunes, who do me the honour to notice me, I have often seen little more than I should have thought it right to have had at my own, if they had favoured me with their company. It is at least certain, that the waste and parade of which I complain, are by no means confined to those who, according to the common phrase, can best afford it.

When ministers of the Gospel are invited, they may sometimes have reason to suppose, that some part of the apparatus they meet with may be intended as a mark of regard and attention to them; and it has the appearance of ingratitude to blame our friends for their kindness; but some of us would be better pleased to be treated less sumptuously, and in a way more conformable to the simplicity of our Christian profession. We would not wish to be considered as avowed epicures, who cannot dine well without a variety of delicacies: and if we could suppose that such cost and variety were designed to remind us how much better we fare abroad than at home, we might think it rather an insult than a compliment. I have known, in families where there is no professed housekeeper, the mistress of the house has been, like Martha, too much encumbered with cares and anxieties in making preparation for her friends. They could not see her so soon as they have wished, and when she has appeared, she could not wholly conceal the discomposure she has felt from some unexpected incident, which has more or less disconcerted the projected arrangement of her feast. Such things may be common among those who live without God in the world: but they should be carefully avoided by those who make a profession, that whether they eat or drink, they do all for his glory. Often we cannot avoid the thought—"this dish, unnecessary in itself, or unnecessarily expensive, might have been well spared, and the money given to the poor;" for there is not a day, in which some of the dear people of God do not find a difficulty in providing bread for their children.

Perhaps there is no one circumstance in the history of our Saviour so little laid to heart, so generally overlooked, by those who acknowledge him as their Master and their Lord, as that state of poverty to which he submitted while upon earth. He had no home; He had not a piece of silver to pay the tribute-money: he was hungry when he went to the fig-tree; and when he sat, like a weary, obscure traveller, by the well-side, he was thirsty; he asked for a little water, and seemed upon the point of being refused. He wrought no miracle solely for his own relief; but he felt for the necessitous, and miraculously fed them by thousands; not with dainties, which would have been equally easy to him, but finding a few loaves and fishes amongst them, he satisfied their

wants without changing their diet. Yea, after his resurrection, when he had taken possession of all power and authority both in heaven and in earth, he condescended to dine with his disciples upon broiled fish and bread, which he likewise provided for them. Alas! the rich followers of this poor Saviour have more reason to be ashamed of their gorgeous apparel, their fine houses, their elegant furniture, and their splendid entertainments, than to value themselves upon such trifles! They are unavoidable appendages to persons in some situations; but, I believe, they who have drank deeply into our Lord's spirit, account them rather burdens than benefits.

I know several persons, whose ability to do much more in this way, if they pleased, than they do, is not disputed; and whose acknowledged benevolence and bounty secure them from the suspicion of being restrained by covetousness. I have often wished that a number of these would form themselves into a society, for the express and avowed purpose of discountenancing, by their example and influence, that sinful, shameful conformity to the world, which spreads like a gangrene, is the reproach of the Gospel, and threatens the utter extinction of vital religion in multitudes who profess it.

But this religious feasting is peculiarly scandalous and abominable, when it is celebrated on the Lord's day. Some professors are not ashamed to say, that they are so taken up with business through the week, that they have no other day in which they can see their friends. But, my dear reader, if you are a man of business, and fear the Lord, I hope you speak very different language. I hope you can say, "I am, indeed, necessarily and closely engaged in business for the six days; but I bless the Lord for the gracious appointment of a day of rest, which sets me free for one day, at least, from the snares and cares of the world, gives me an opportunity of recruiting my spiritual strength by private and public attendance upon the Lord, and affords me a little time to attend to the state of my children and servants. I love my friends; but if my business will not permit me to see them at other times, it is better for me not to see them at all, than to be interrupted in the improvement of my privileges on the Lord's day."

But they who then choose to meet in troops, and feed themselves without fear, will still have something to plead. They are all professors, they do not visit the people of the world, nor receive visits from them. They manage so as to hear two good Gospel sermons in the day, and perhaps have a hymn and a prayer after dinner into the bargain. Though they go well filled to the evening worship, they are far from being intoxicated. Will they say, Is there any harm in this? Ask their servants, for whom they are

responsible, and who have as good a right as themselves to worship the Lord on his own day. But the poor servants are perhaps more harassed and fatigued on the Lord's day than on any other day of the week. If they still say, "What harm?" let me only appeal to your own consciences: Is this "to eat and to drink to the glory of God?" If you can persuade yourselves to think so, I pity you but know not what answer to return.

OMICRON.

April 11, 1795.

THOUGHTS ON FAITH, AND THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

We may easily conceive of a tree without fruit, but the idea of fruit is naturally connected with that of some tree or shrub which produces it. In this sense, assurance is the essence of faith; that is, it springs from true faith, and can grow upon no other root. Faith likewise is the *measure* of assurance. While faith is weak, (our Lord compares it in its first principles to a grain of mustard seed,) assurance cannot be strong.

Jesus Christ the Lord is a complete, all-sufficient Saviour. His invitation to the weary and heavy laden is general, without exception, condition, or limitation. He has said, Him that cometh unto me, I will *in no wise* cast out. God not only permits, but commands us to believe in the Son of his love. The apostle affirms that he is able to save, to the *uttermost*, all that come unto God by him. When Moses raised the brazen serpent in the wilderness, the direction to the wounded Israelites was very short and simple; it was only, Look, and live. Thus the Gospel addresses the sinner, Only believe, and thou shalt be saved.

Why, then, does not every sinner who is awakened to a sense of his guilt, danger, and helplessness, and whose desires are drawn towards the Saviour, believe with full confidence, even upon his first application for mercy? Is not the remedy fully adequate to the malady? Is not the blood of Jesus able to cleanse from all sin? Is not the word of the God of truth worthy of entire credit? Yet, with such a Saviour exhibited before the eyes of his mind, and with such promises sounding in his ears, he continues to hesitate and fluctuate between hope and fear. Could he rely as firmly on the word of God as he can on the word of a man, who, he thinks, means what he says, and is able to make good his promises, he would immediately be filled with joy and peace in believing. But experience and observation may convince us, that, however rational and easy his assurance may

seem in theory, it is ordinarily unattainable in practice, without passing through a train of previous exercises and conflicts.

It is true, young converts are often favoured with comfortable impressions, which lead them to hope that their doubts and difficulties are already ended, when, perhaps, they are but just entering upon their warfare. They are brought as it were into a new world: a strong and lively sense of divine things engrosses their attention; the world sinks into nothing in their esteem; the evil propensities which discourage them are overpowered for a season, and they hope they are quite subdued, and will trouble them no more. Their love, gratitude, praise, and admiration, are in vigorous exercise. An aged, experienced Christian may recollect, with a pleasing regret, many sweet sensations of this kind, in the early stages of his profession, which he cannot recall. But he now knows that the strong confidence he felt in these golden hours was not the assurance of faith;—it was temporary and transient;—it was founded upon what we call a good frame. Though his comforts were strong, his faith was weak; for when the good frame subsided, his fears returned, his hope declined, and he was at his wit's end. Then, perhaps, he wondered at his own presumption, for daring to hope that such a creature as himself could have any right to the privileges of a believer. And if, in the warmth of his heart, he had spoken to others of what God had done for his soul, he afterwards charged himself with being a hypocrite, and a false witness both to God and man. Thus, when the Israelites saw the Egyptians (who had pursued and terrified them) cast up dead upon the shore of the Red Sea, they praised the Lord, and believed. They were little aware of the wilderness they had to pass through, and the trials they were to meet with, before they could enter the promised land.

But strong faith and the effect of it, an abiding persuasion of our acceptance in the beloved, and of our final perseverance in grace, are not necessarily connected with sensible comfort. A strong faith can trust God in the dark, and say, with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Yet it is not to be maintained without a diligent use of the instituted means of grace, and conscientious attention to the precepts of the Gospel. For notions of truth, destitute of power, will not keep the heart in peace. But this power depends upon the influence of the Holy Spirit; and if He is grieved by the wilful commission of sin, or the wilful neglect of the precepts, he hides his face, suspends his influence, and then confidence, must proportionably decline, till he is pleased to return, and revive it. There are likewise bodily disorders, which, by depressing the animal spirits, darken and discolour the medium of our perceptions. If the enemy is permit-

ted to take advantage of these seasons, he can pour in a flood of temptations, sufficient to fill the most assured believer with terror and dismay. But, ordinarily, they who endeavour to walk closely and conscientiously with God, attain, in due time, an assurance of hope to the end, which is not easily nor often shaken, though it is not absolutely perfect, nor can be while so much sin and imperfection remain in us.

If it be inquired, why we cannot attain to this state of composure at first, since the object of faith and the promises of God are always the same?—several reasons may be assigned.

Unbelief is the primary cause of all our inquietude, from the moment that our hearts are drawn to seek salvation by Jesus. This inability to take God at his word, should not be merely lamented as an infirmity, but watched, and prayed, and fought against as a great sin. A great sin indeed it is; the very root of our apostacy, from which every other sin proceeds. It often deceives us under the guise of humility, as though it would be presumption, in such sinners as we are, to believe the declarations of the God of truth. Many serious people, who are burdened with a sense of other sins, leave this radical evil out of the list. They rather indulge it, and think they ought not to believe, till they can find a warrant from marks and evidences within themselves. But this is an affront to the wisdom and goodness of God, who points out to us the Son of his love, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, without any regard to what we have been, or to what we are, excepting that broken and contrite spirit which only himself can create in us. And this broken spirit, though unbelief perverts it to our discouragement, is the very temper in which the Lord delights, and a surer evidence of true grace than those which we are apt to contrive for ourselves. It is written, He that believeth not the record which God hath given of his Son maketh him a liar. Why do we not start with horror at the workings of unbelief, as we should do at a suggestion to commit murder, or the grossest outward enormity?

Again, our natural *pride* is a great hindrance to believing. If we acknowledge ourselves to be sinners, and are sensible of our need of mercy, we are not easily brought to see that we are so totally depraved, so exceedingly vile, so utterly destitute of all good, as the word of God describes us to be. A secret dependence upon prayers, tears, resolutions, repentance, and endeavours, prevents us from looking solely and simply to the Saviour, so as to ground our whole hope for acceptance upon his obedience unto death, and his whole mediation. A true believer will, doubtless, repent and pray, and forsake his former evil ways; but he is not accepted upon the account of what he does or feels, but because Jesus lived,

and died, and rose, and reigns on the behalf of sinners, and because he is enabled, by grace, to trust in him for salvation. Further, pride leads us into that spirit of vain reasoning, which is contrary to the simplicity of faith. Till this is renounced, till we become in some measure like little children, and receive the doctrines of Scripture *implicitly* because they are from God, requiring no further proof of any point than a *Thus saith the Lord;* we cannot be established in our hope. Naaman was very desirous to be healed of his leprosy; but if the Lord had not mercifully over-ruled his prejudices, he would have returned a leper as he came. Before he went to Elisha, he had considered in his own mind, how the prophet *ought* to treat him; and not having the immediate attention paid to him that he expected, he was upon the point of going away; for his reason told him, that if washing could effect his cure, the waters of Syria were as good as those of Jordan. "It seems," to use the words of a late ingenious writer, "that the Gospel is too good to be believed, and too plain to be understood, till our pride is abased."

It is difficult to determine by the eye the precise moment of day-break: but the light advances from early dawn, and the sun arises at the appointed hour. Such is the progress of divine light in the mind: the first streaks of the dawn are seldom perceived; but, by degrees, objects, till then unthought of, are disclosed. The evil of sin, the danger of the soul, the reality and importance of eternal things, are apprehended, and a hope of mercy through a Saviour is discovered, which prevents the sinner from sinking into absolute despair. But for a time all is indistinct and confused. In this state of mind, many things are anxiously sought for as pre-requisites to believing, but they are sought in vain, for it is only by believing that they can be obtained. But the light increases, the sun arises, the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ shines in upon the soul. As the sun can only be seen by its own light, and diffuses that light by which other objects are clearly perceived; so Christ crucified is the sun in the system of revealed truth; and the right knowledge of the doctrine of his cross satisfies the inquiring mind, proves itself to be the one thing needful, and the only thing necessary to silence the objections of unbelief and pride, and to afford a sure ground for solid and abiding hope.

Once more; we cannot be safely trusted with assurance till we have that knowledge of the evil and deceitfulness of our hearts, which can be acquired only by painful, repeated experience. The young convert, in his brighter hours, when his heart is full of joys, and he thinks his mountain stands too strong to be removed, may be compared to a ship with much sail spread, and but little

ballast. She goes on well while the weather is fair, but is not prepared for a storm. When Peter said, "Thou hast the words of eternal life, we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ," and when he protested, "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I," he undoubtedly spoke honestly; but the event showed that he did not know himself. His resolution was soon and sorely shaken in the hall of the high-priest, so that he denied his Lord with oaths and imprecations. He was left to fall, that he might learn he did not stand by his own strength. The parable of the prodigal may be accommodated for an illustration of this point. The Scripture says, "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord." But we often want to know at first, and at once: and suppose—If I was but sure that I am right, and accepted in the Beloved, I could go on with more spirit and success. Many rejoice greatly when they seem to obtain this desire, but their joy is short-lived. They soon resemble the prodigal; they become vain, rash, and careless; they forsake their father's house; their attention to the means of grace is slackened; they venture upon smaller deviations from the prescribed rule, which, in time, lead them to greater. Thus their stock of grace and comfort is quickly exhausted. They begin to be in want; and after having been feasted with the bread of life, are reduced to feed upon such husks as the world can afford them. Happy, if at length they are brought to their right minds! But, oh! with what pungent shame and humiliation do they come back to their Father! He, indeed, is always ready to receive and forgive backsliders; but surely they cannot easily forgive themselves for their ingratitude and folly. When he has healed their broken bones, and restored peace to their souls, it may be expected that they will walk softly and humbly to the end of their days, and not open their mouths any more, either to boast, or to censure, or to complain.

For, a man who possesses a Scriptural and well grounded assurance in himself, will evidence it to others by suitable fruits. He will be meek, unassuming, and gentle in his conduct, before men, because he is humbled and abased before God. Because he lives upon much forgiveness, he will be ready to forgive. The prospect of that blessed hope assuredly laid up for him in heaven, will make him patient under all his appointed trials in the present life, wean him from an attachment to the world, and preserve him from being much affected either by the smiles or the frowns of mortals. To hear persons talk much of their assurance, and that they are freed from all doubts and fears, while they habitually indulge proud, angry, resentful, discontented tempers, or while they are eagerly grasping after the world, like those who seek their whole portion in it, is painful and disgusting to a serious

mind. Let us pity them, and pray for them; for we have great reason to fear that they do not understand what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

OMICRON.

July 11, 1795.

ON COVETOUSNESS.

WHAT is Covetousness? It is an easy besetting sin, from which few persons are entirely free; and it is eminently deceitful. It is decried and condemned in others, by multitudes who live in the habit of it themselves. It is very difficult to fix a conviction of this sin upon those who are guilty of it. Whether drunkards or profligates regard the warnings of the preacher or not, when he declares that they who persist in those evil practices shall not inherit the kingdom of God; they know at least their own characters, and are sensible that they are the persons intended. But if he adds, Nor the covetous man, who is an idolater—the covetous man usually sits unmoved, and is more ready to apply the threatenings to his neighbour than to himself. If he is willing to entertain the ministers or friends of the Gospel sometimes at his table, if he now and then gives a few shillings to the poor, and a guinea or two to a charitable subscription, he cannot suspect that he is liable to the charge of covetousness.

There are two words in the Greek Testament, which are rendered *covetousness* in our version. The one literally signifies, *The love of money*: the other, *A desire of more*. The senses are indeed coincident; for no man would desire more of that which he did not love; and as he that loveth silver cannot be satisfied with the silver that he already possesses, he will of course desire more. Money is generally loved and valued at first, as a mean of procuring other things which appear desirable; but many who begin thus, are brought, at length, to love money for its own sake. Such persons are called misers. We meet with those, who, so far from being benevolent to others, are cruel to themselves; and, though abounding in wealth, can hardly afford themselves the necessaries of life. But a man may be very covetous, though, not being yet given up to this judicial infatuation, he may congratulate himself, and thank God, that he is not a miser.

I consider covetousness as the most generally prevailing and ensnaring sin, by which professors of the Gospel, in our commercial city, are hindered in their spiritual progress. A disposition deeply rooted in our fallen nature, strengthened by the habits of business, the immense circulation of cash, the power of custom,

and the fascinating charm of a balance-sheet, is not easily counteracted.

If we are, indeed, believers in Christ, and partakers of the power of his resurrection, we are bound by obligation, and required by our rule, to set our affections on the things that are above, not on the things on the earth. He has called us out of the world, and cautioned us against conformity to its spirit. While we are in the world, it is our duty, privilege, and honour, to manifest that grace which has delivered us from the love of it. Christians must indeed eat and drink, and may buy and sell, as other people do; but the principles, motives, and ends of their conduct, are entirely different. They are to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, and to do all for his glory. By his wisdom and providence, he places them in different situations, that the power and sufficiency of his grace may appear under a great variety of outward circumstances. He gives them talents, to some more, to others less; but all to be improved for him. Whether they are rich or poor, bond or free, they are so by his appointment; with which, if they cheerfully comply, they shall, in due time, be sensible that he chooses better for them than they could have chosen themselves. The language of faith, when in exercise, will not be, "What is most conducive to my temporal ease and prosperity?" but, "What will give me the fairest opportunity of glorifying him who has bought me with his blood, and called me out of darkness into his marvellous light? Too much of my time has already been wasted: how shall I improve the little uncertain remainder for his service? I am too short-sighted to judge for myself, but he has thus far determined it. I am where he has placed me: and the calling in which his mercy found me (if it be a lawful one) is that in which, for the present, I am to abide, as the best for me. When it ceases to be so, I may depend upon him to appoint me another. But till then, I desire to be contented with such things as I have, and to be thankful for them. He knows my frame, my feelings, my wants, and my trials; he permits, yea, invites me to cast all my cares upon him; he assures me that he careth for me, and therefore I only wish to do or to suffer according to his will to-day, and to leave the concerns of to-morrow in his hands. While I live, may I live for him, and when I die, may I go to him! May his grace be sufficient for me, and all shall be well."

The Christian knows, or should know, that it is not necessary to be rich, or to be admired or envied by an unthinking world; but it is absolutely necessary for him to maintain peace of conscience, communion with God, and a cheerful activity of spirit in his service. And as his gracious Lord accepts him, not according to what he actually does, but according to what he would do if he could, so that he who can only give a cup of cold water to a

prophet, in the name of a prophet, should receive a prophet's reward. In this respect all his people, however differently situated, are exactly upon a par. Luke, xxi. 3, 4.

But, alas! how many who profess to know and value the Gospel, are far otherwise minded! The chief mark of their profession is, their attendance upon the ordinances of worship. At other times, and in other respects, they are not easily distinguished from the world. If their houses, furniture, tables, and other appendages, secure them from the suspicion of being misers, the manner in which they follow their business sufficiently proves them to be covetous. If, when they can find leisure to speak of religion, they complain that their frames are low, and that they have but little comfort in the ways of God, this is the most favourable token we can find to encourage our hope, that in the midst of all their hurry, there may be a latent sincerity at the bottom. For how can it be otherwise, if they had a spark of life and grace in their hearts, while they attempt to look two ways at once, and to reconcile the incompatible claims of God and mammon? The love of money, and the desire of more, are always in exercise. As to these, their frames seldom vary, from the beginning to the end of the year. They rise early, take late rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, that they may be able to vie with the world in their outward appearance, and to lay up snares, and thorns, and encumbrances, for their children. Often, when already possessed of a lawful business, which affords a competence for a comfortable support, if opportunity offers they eagerly catch at some other prospect of gain, though they thereby double their anxieties, and encroach still more upon that time (too little before) which they could afford to allot to the concerns of their souls. Such opportunities they call providential openings, and perhaps say they are thankful for them; not considering that such openings of Providence are frequently temptations, or tests, which the Lord permits a man to meet with, to prove what is in his heart, and to try him, whether he will hold fast his integrity or not, and whether his affections be indeed set on the things above, or still cleave to the earth.

It is sometimes the pleasure of the Lord to give a servant of his what the world calls prosperity. He places him in a line of life suited to his turn and ability, prepares a plain path before him, and by a blessing upon his industry and economy, the man, perhaps, from small beginnings, increases in wealth, almost imperceptibly, with little other solicitude on his own part, than a faithful attention to the duties of his calling from day to day. Such a person is a public benefit. The Lord, who gives him riches, teaches him likewise how to use them. He chiefly values the increase of his property and influence, as they enlarge his sphere of usefulness. He is ready and active to promote the cause of God in the

world, and to relieve the wants and miseries of his fellow-creatures. He is eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; the friend of the fatherless and the widow. Persons of this character are to be found amongst us; but compared with the bulk of professors, we may apply to them what the poet says of the fleet of Æneas after the storm:

Apparent rari, nantes in gurgite vasto.

A few still swim upon the waves, which have swallowed up many. For those who, as the apostle expresses it, "will be rich," who will strain every nerve to load themselves with thick clay, and to be found in the list of those who gain much money, or transact much business, may, and often do, obtain the poor reward they seek. As in the case of Israel, when, not satisfied with bread from heaven, they importunately clamoured for flesh likewise; God gives them their desire, but sends leanness withal into their souls. They expose themselves to temptations and snares, to foolish passions and pursuits; and thus too many, who promised fair at the first setting out, are drowned in destruction and perdition. For it is written in the Scripture, that no covetous man, who is an idolater, shall inherit the kingdom of God; and the Scriptures cannot be broken.

At the best, if they do not finally perish, they are in great danger of erring from the faith, and certainly pierce themselves through with many sorrows: for the love of money is the root of all evil. We may err from the faith, without changing the form of our creed, or imbibing doctrinal errors. Faith is an active, powerful principle; it realizes things unseen, it leads to the throne of grace, it feeds upon the word of life, it desires and obtains communion with God, and power from the Spirit of grace, by which it purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world. These are the sure effects of faith; and he who does not in some measure experience them in himself, may have an opinion, a notion of the truths of the Gospel, and may be right in theory; but he is either an utter stranger to the faith of God's people, or has greatly erred from it.

Who can enumerate the many sorrows with which the covetous and worldly-minded professor is pierced? Especially if it be the Lord's pleasure to be gracious to him, and he purposes to bring him at last out of the snares in which he is entangled. Then, sooner or later, his schemes are broken; losses, crosses, disappointments, and anxieties, wear down his spirit. Improper connexions which he would form, because he would be rich, become thorns in his sides and in his eyes. He trusted in men, and men deceive him; he leaned upon a weak reed, which breaks, and he

falls: Thus he finds that the way of transgressors and backsliders is hard. His distresses are aggravated by the voice of conscience, which will speak, and will be heard—"Hast thou not procured these things to thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way?"

Covetousness, or the love of the world, is one great cause of the many trials we meet with in life. The principle of this evil is so strong in us, and so powerfully nourished by almost every thing around us, that it is seldom suppressed but by a course of sharp discipline. Many persons have now reason to be thankful for those dispensations of Providence which once seem most severe. If the Lord had not seasonably defeated their plans of life, withered their gourds, broken their cisterns, and wounded them where they were most keenly sensible, they might, yea, they would have gone on from bad to worse. But losses are gains, and the heaviest trials are mercies, when sanctified to bring us to our right minds and to guide our feet into the paths of peace.

If, therefore, my dear reader, you wish to avoid trouble, and to pass through life as smooth as possible, take heed and beware of covetousness. If the Lord loves you, he will not lose you; and therefore he will beat you, as it were, in a mortar, if necessary, rather than permit that to remain in you which his soul abhors, and which, if it were to remain, would exclude you from his kingdom. He has said, and daily experience and observation confirm his aphorism, "A man's life (the real comforts of it) consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Gold cannot communicate peace of mind, nor compensate for the want of it. Surely they who are satisfied with a little of this world's goods, must be more happy than they who are not satisfied with a great deal. Remember, likewise, that where much is given, much will be required; and seriously consider, what will it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul!

OMICRON.

Oct. 2, 1795.

ON THE COMFORTS AND SNARES OF SOCIAL AND RELATIVE AFFECTIONS.

Alas! how difficult do we find it to observe a due medium between overvaluing and undervaluing our creature comforts; especially those of social and relative life. The mutual affections which does, or should subsist between husband and wife, parents and children, and proportionably between other family connexions, or our intimate and tried friends, constitute our chief tempo-

ral pleasures. These are almost the only pleasures this earth can afford, which are very interesting to an intelligent and serious mind. For these the voluptuary has little relish; sensuality has blunted his feelings and his gratifications are scarcely superior to those of the brutes.

Such persons are not at present concerned in the subject of this paper, nor can they well understand it. I write for those who possess and value the comforts of domestic life, acknowledge the goodness of the Lord in bestowing and preserving them, who wish to make them additional motives for gratitude and praise, but are often apprehensive that their attachment to his gifts withdraw their thoughts from the great Giver, and encroach upon that supreme regard which is only due to himself.

A disposition to love the creature more than the Creator, is undoubtedly a part and a proof of our natural depravity. This evil principle, described by the apostle under the names of the Flesh, the Old Man, and Indwelling Sin, however weakened and mortified in a true believer is not extirpated. The opposition between nature and grace, flesh and spirit, renders the Christian life a state of constant warfare. They are opposite, contrary, contradictory one to the other; no peace or truce can subsist between them. The effects of this conflict extend to every faculty: when grace is in exercise, the motions of sin are noticed, checked, and lamented; but they are always sufficiently strong to render our best intentions and best actions defective and polluted; and particularly to depreciate and adulterate the finest feelings of humanity, and to turn our glory into shame. Thus our comforts often become our snares, and that which should be for our health proves an occasion of falling.

We cannot be too watchful against this propensity: it should prompt us to daily humiliation and much prayer. But the Lord is not a hard master; he gives us all things richly to enjoy; not to raise, and then disappoint our expectations, but, within the limits his wisdom prescribes, to gratify them. Ignorance and superstition misrepresent him. Under their influence multitudes think to please him by self-invented austerities and mortifications, and suppose they shall be acceptable to him, in proportion as they make themselves miserable. But, on the contrary, we are assured that he delights in our prosperity, so far as it is consistent with our safety; and that he does not willingly afflict the children of men, and especially his own children, who love and serve him. He has placed us in a world, in which (considered as his world) every thing is beautiful in its season, proper use, and due subordination, to our chief good; though, considered as *man's* world, our apostacy has filled it with confusion and misery.

Contemplate his goodness in a rural situation. Light, colours, and prospects, are suited to please the eye. The singing of birds, the lowing of the cattle the bleating of the sheep, and, in general, the inarticulate tones of all the animal tribe, are soothing and grateful to the ear. During a great part of the year, the scent of blossoms and flowers perfumes the air, and regales the sense of smelling. Food is a necessary mean for the preservation of life, and would be so if it were no less unpalatable than the most nauseous drugs. But we are furnished with a profusion and variety of articles, which, while they satisfy our hunger, and recruit our strength, are likewise grateful to the palate, and accommodated to the different tastes of different persons: nay, he has not only given us food, but fruits. These are certainly not needful for the support of life, nor are they interdicted, like the fruit of the tree of knowledge, but are freely presented for our use. Things might have been so constituted, that all our sensations from external objects would have been disagreeable and painful. But God is good. We should live in the midst of continual enjoyments if we obeyed his precepts, and observed his regulations; which, however contrary to the evil disposition of our fallen nature, amount to no more than the kind admonition, *Do thyself no harm;* for there is not a single restriction enjoined by the scripture, with which it would not be our interest to comply, if the authority of God was wholly out of the question. But sin, where it prevails, dishonours God, abuses his gifts, and throws all into confusion. Intemperance, riot and disorderly passions, have filled the earth with wo.

Thus, as we are creatures formed for society, and cannot live, with either safety or comfort, in a solitary state, it has pleased God, of his goodness, to make us susceptive of social affections, which sweeten our intercourse with each other, and combine duty with pleasure. Parents are certainly bound by the law of nature to take care of their own children, and to provide for them; especially in the helpless state of infancy, when they are utterly unable to take care of themselves. This would often be an irksome task, if they did not feel an instinctive tenderness for their infant offspring at first sight, which makes that delightful which might otherwise be troublesome.

It is likewise the appointment of God, that the successive generations of mankind should be perpetuated by marriage. As this is the nearest of all natural relations, so when the union is properly formed and conducted, it is the most interesting and endeared. This union, by the will of God, is in itself indissoluble till death makes a separation, excepting in the single case of unfaithfulness. But the marriage state, when entered into without a regard to

God, to the rules of his word, and a dependence upon his blessing, is seldom productive of an abiding union of hearts; and if this be wanting, the case of either party may be compared to that of a dislocated limb, which is indeed still united to the body, but, not being in its proper place and connexion, is useless and painful itself, and the cause of pain and uneasiness to the whole body. Even the marriages of those who come together, and live together in the fear of the Lord, are subject to heavy taxes; doubled in wedlock, and frequently multiplied in children; they have a larger share of cares, duties, and anxieties, than those who live single; yet they are comparatively happy. And I think, all things considered, they have the most favoured lot. They love the Lord, they seek his presence and blessing, and they do not seek in vain. They love each other, they have one faith, one aim, one hope. Their mutual affection, intimacy, and perfect confidence, greatly enhance the value and relish of the comforts in which they participate, and alleviate the weight of their burdens and trials. Love sweetens labour, and blunts the sting of sorrow. The vicissitudes of life give energy to prayer; and repeated supports and deliverances, in answer to prayer, afford new motives and causes for praise and thanksgiving.

But still they are jealous of themselves, lest those affectionate feelings, which greatly assist them in discharging their social and relative duties with attention and cheerfulness, should become excessive and idolatrous. And, as I have already observed, they have reason to be always upon their guard, lest that which is lawful and right in itself, should, by being indulged in an immoderate degree, become ensnaring and hurtful. A true believer is, for the most part, rather shocked than seduced by temptations to gross evils: his heart recoils at the proposal. He thinks, with Joseph, "How can I do this wickedness, and sin against God?" *Perimus in licitis*—His chief danger lies in the abuse of lawful things. The relation we stand in to God, as his intelligent creatures, from whom we derive all that we have or are, and on whom we depend for every breath we draw, makes it our indispensable duty to love him with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. And as we have broken this law of our creation, he has in mercy been pleased to claim us for his own by a new and more endearing title. He has redeemed us to himself by his blood. He has bought us with a price, and paid his life as a ransom for our souls. When a sinner is enabled to feel the force of this argument, he needs no more: the love of Christ constrains him. From that moment he is made willing to devote himself, and his all, to him who died for him. But the flesh striveth against the Spirit: he is still a poor creature. He cannot do

the things that he would, nor as he would; otherwise every thought of his heart should be in absolute subjection to his Lord and Saviour.

The Lord, who knows our frame, and whereof we are made, is unspeakably merciful to our infirmities, but he will not admit a rival. The believer knows and acknowledges, that whatever he possesses, which is not held and improved in subordination and subserviency to the will and glory of him from whom he received it, is so far an idol; and the consciousness of his proneness to afford these intruders an undue share in his affections, often makes him confess to the Lord, with Job, "Behold, I am vile," though his outward conduct in the sight of men may be unblameable and exemplary.

Yet, perhaps, some persons may be overburdened with this apprehension. The Gospel is not designed to make us stoics: it allows full room for those social feelings which are so necessary and beneficial in our present state, though it teaches and enjoins their due regulations. It is the duty, no less than the privilege of husbands, to love their wives, even as their ownselves, yea, even as Christ loved the Church, who gave himself for it. These expressions are very strong; they imply great love, tenderness, and sympathy. When the Lord said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest," he did not reprove him for loving his child; and Abraham's prompt obedience, when commanded to offer up his beloved son, was a proof, that though his love to Isaac was strong, it was not inordinate. And the apostle declares, "that if any man provide not for those of his own house, (his kindred, his more distant relatives by blood or affinity,) he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." He is to provide for them, if in his power, in preference to others, which plainly intimates that they are preferably entitled to his love. Friendship, likewise, between those who are joint partakers of grace, is very consistent with true religion. Such was the friendship between David and Jonathan. And though our Lord loved all his disciples, one of them is honoured with a peculiar distinction, as the disciple whom Jesus loved.

God formed us originally for himself, and endued the human mind with a capacity which he alone can fill. But when he dwells in the heart, there is still room for innumerable objects of complacence, in their proper subordinate order. When a woman marries, she may continue to love her own parents and relatives as formerly; she may extend her affection and regard to the parents and friends of her husband; in a course of years the number of those whom she loves and values may be greatly increas-

ed, without interfering with each other, or with what she owes to her husband; but there is a different and special regard due to him, which if she should transfer to another person, she would be criminal. Thus we may love, and we ought to love, our husbands, wives, children, parents, and friends; and if we consider them as the Lord's gifts—if we seek his blessing in them and upon them—if we hold them at his disposal—if we employ all our influence with them, to engage them to seek and love him supremely—if, when they are removed from us, we are disposed to yield a cheerful submission to his holy will; and if, when things are brought into competition, we rather choose to venture displeasing our dearest friends, than to sin against the Lord—with these restrictions we cannot easily love them too much.

But who can come up to this standard? I suppose no person can completely. But we may aim at it; we may lament our deficiency; we may pray for more grace; and by grace we may approximate more and more to it. It is not necessary to distress ourselves with what may happen; as, how should I behave, if the Lord were to take the desire of my eyes from me suddenly? We are to live to-day, and to leave to-morrow with him. If we presume that we could support such a stroke, we should probably find it too heavy for us. But this we *may* say, The Lord is all sufficient, and he is faithful. He has promised strength according to the day. He permits me to call upon him in the time of trouble; and I trust when the time of trouble shall come, he will enable me to pray for that help from him, without which I know I must sink; for in myself I am weaker than a bruised reed. In the mean time I endeavour to cast all my care upon him who careth for me.

For the rest, we are in the Lord's school—the school of the cross. His daily providential dispensations are suited to wean our attachment from every thing here, and to convince us that this cannot be our rest—it is polluted. Our roses grow on thorns, our honey wears a sting. Frequently our sharpest trials spring from our choicest comforts. Perhaps, while we are admiring our gourd, a worm is secretly preying upon its root. As every bitter thing is sweetened to a believer, so there is some bitter things mingled with the sweet. This is wisely and mercifully ordered. It is necessary. And if things were not so bad with us, as in the language of sense they sometimes are, they would probably be soon much worse. With such hearts as we have, and in such a world as we live in, much discipline is needful to keep us from sleeping upon the enchanted ground. But the time is short. It will not be thus always. We hope soon to be out of the reach of sin and temptation. Happy hour, when sorrow and mourning,

hitherto our inseparable companions, shall flee away, to return no more! when joy and gladness shall come forth to meet us, and conduct us home! Then those who have loved each other in the Lord upon earth, shall rejoice together before him, shall drink of the rivers of pleasure that are at his right hand, and their happiness shall be unspeakable, uninterrupted, without abatement, and without end.

OMICRON.

THE CONSTRAINING INFLUENCE OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST:

A Sermon,

PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF THE UNITED PARISHES OF

ST. MARY WOOLNOTH AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH-HAW,

LOMBARD-STREET,

BEFORE THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE LORD MAYOR, ALDERMEN, AND SHERIFFS,

On the 30th day of March, 1800.

FOR THE BENEFIT OF

Langbourn-Ward Charity-School.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Matt. v. 16.

TO THE

TREASURER, THE TRUSTEES, AND COMMITTEE

OF

THE CHARITY SCHOOL OF LANGBOURN-WARD,

This Sermon,

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED AND PRESENTED

BY THEIR OBEDIENT SERVANT,

JOHN NEWTON.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The Preacher cannot publish this Sermon as an exact copy of what he delivered from the pulpit. Some interval passed before he was desired to print it. His recollection is much impaired by age; and he had no notes to assist it; but the plan is the same. He hopes and believes that none of the leading sentiments are omitted, and that the additions, if any, are but few. As it is, he commends the perusal to the candour of the reader, and blessing of Almighty God.

THE

CONSTRAINING INFLUENCE OF THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

2 CORINTHIANS, v. 13—15.

For, whether we be beside ourselves it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For, the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.

THE apostles, and first preachers of the Gospel among the heathens, exhibited to them a phenomenon perfectly new. The Greeks and Romans had known persons, among themselves, who had strenuously exerted their talents and activity in the pursuit of fame, power, or wealth; but they now saw men no less indefatigable and persevering in prosecuting a design which, far from procuring them either honour or profit, exposed them, wherever they went, to contempt, stripes, imprisonment, and death. Their professed aim was to make others as happy as themselves in the possession of an unseen Good. For the attainment of this end, they willingly gave up all prospect of worldly advantage, though they were generally treated with scorn and cruelty by the most of those whose bests interests they wished to serve. This was a disinterested benevolence, of which the philosophers, the pretended friends of wisdom and virtue, had no idea; nor were the means they employed better understood. They preached Jesus Christ, and him crucified!* For endeavouring to persuade their hearers to place their whole hope and dependence upon one whom they had never seen, but who had been publicly executed as a malefactor; and to affirm that this Jesus, who died upon the cross, was yet alive;† that he, who could not save himself from an ignominious death, was the author of eternal salvation to those who believed on him; for these strange assertions, they were pitied or despised as visionaries, by those who did not revile them as hypocrites. Thus Festus, who seemed to have a favourable opinion of St. Paul's integrity, when he heard him relate the manner of his conversion, thought that no man, in his sober senses, could talk so;

* 1 Cor. ii. 2. † Mark, xv. 31.

and therefore he said, with a loud voice, "Paul, thou art beside thyself.*"

But his Lord and Master was treated thus before him, and upon similar grounds. His zeal for the honour of his heavenly Father and his compassion for the souls of men, carried him so far, that we read, his friends, that is, his relations according to the flesh, and who really wished him well, sought to lay hold of him, and restrain him; for they said, he is beside himself.†

The apostle Paul was not mad; he spoke the words of truth and soberness; he knew whom he had believed; he knew the worth of immortal souls, and the importance of eternity. He had once fiercely opposed the Gospel, breathed out threatenings‡ and slaughter against the disciples, and, not content with the mischief he had done in Jerusalem, was hastening to Damascus to vex and wrong the believers there; but he was arrested in his journey by a light and a voice from heaven; he found himself in the power of that Jesus whom he had persecuted, and who is pleased to consider all that is done, either for or against his people, as done to himself. The furious Paul, of Tarsus, was humbled, pardoned, and, in a few days, commissioned to preach that faith which he had so pertinaciously laboured to destroy. From that hour, renouncing all connection with his former friends, the chief priests and council, and all expectations from them; renouncing likewise that righteousness of the law in which he before had boasted, he devoted himself to the service of his Lord and Saviour, and of the cause which he had opposed. His ardour was astonishing and exemplary. Unwearied by labour, undismayed by danger, unaffected by hardship and suffering, but supported and cheered by the presence of him whom he served, he preached the Gospel in season and out of season, publicly and from house to house, in Judea, in Asia, in Greece, in Italy, and many other parts of the Roman empire. For this zeal in seeking to promote the good of others, of strangers, of enemies, at the expense of all that was dear to himself as a man, he found, as he expected, in almost every place which he visited, open oppositions, and secret conspiracies against his life: he was scourged by the Jews, beaten with rods by the Romans, and confined in prisons and chains. He was likewise the marked object of general contempt; the wise men of the times despised him as a babbler; he was regarded by many as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things; many said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, it is not fit that he should live!"§ But when, in defiance of all discouragements, he still pressed forward, as if he had done nothing, while any thing more remained

* Acts, xxvi. 24. † Mark, iii. 21. ‡ Acts, ix. § Acts, xxii. 22.

to be done, accounted the disgrace he met with his honour, and gloried in his chains,* we cannot wonder if the more moderate of his observers, who knew not his principles, thought that he was surely beside himself.

The only apology he saw fit to make, is expressed in my text. The bulk of mankind in Christendom, by whatever name they are distinguished, pay little more regard to the Gospel than the Jews or heathens did in the apostle's days. The heart of man, in its natural state, is the same in all ages, devoid of either taste or inclination for the things of God, till visited by power from on high. Faithful ministers are still liable to be thought beside themselves, by some, for the subject-matter of their discourses; by others, for the importunity and freedom of their addresses to the consciences of their hearers. We are, however, encouraged by St. Paul's example, and we adopt his apology: If we are beside ourselves, it is to God. We speak in his name, and the message we deliver, so far as agreeable to the Scripture, is from him, and to him we are responsible. If we are sober, if we expostulate and reason with you, in familiar language, upon the uncertainty of life, the certainty of death, and a future judgment, and other truths, which none but infidels will venture to deny, it is for your sakes.

The word *enthusiasm* is often used by the same person, in two very very different senses. It is a term of commendation when applied to orators, poets, painters, or sculptors, and expresses the energy of genius. No one is expected to excel in the fine arts without a portion of enthusiasm; and it is supposed essential to military prowess. But it has quite another acceptation in religious concerns. If a minister of the Gospel is warm and earnest, he is frequently stigmatized as an enthusiast, that is, as the imposers of the name would have it understood, a person of a weak mind and disordered judgment, if he be really sincere; for many are willing to suppose that his enthusiasm is no more than a mask or veil, assumed to cover the artful views of a designing hypocrite.

For myself, it is a small thing for me to be judged by man's judgment.† At my time of life, nearly the close of my seventy-fifth year, it behoves me to think it very possible, yea, not improbable, that every time I appear in the pulpit may be my last; and, when I look round upon this respectable congregation, I doubtless see some persons before me who will never hear me again. Perhaps we shall meet no more in this world; but we shall certainly meet before the tribunal of the Great Judge, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden. Then *I* must give an account of my ministry,

* Acts, xxviii. 20. † 1 Cor. iv. 3.

and *you* must give an account of yourselves to God. Surely, if I believe what the Scripture teaches of the evil of sin, the glory of the Saviour, the worth of the soul, and the importance of eternity, you will allow me to speak with the same degree of emotion. As this may be my last opportunity, if there were but one person amongst us, who has not yet attended duly to these great subjects, I must not let him depart as he came: I must warn him by the terrors of the Lord; I must beseech him by his tender mercies :* I am desirous to save both my own soul and the souls of those that hear me.† Whether I be beside myself, or sober, it is for the cause of God and for your sakes. The love of Christ constraineth me.

We may observe, from this passage,

I. The grand leading motive of the apostle's conduct, "The love of Christ constrains us."

II. Two doctrines which virtually comprehend the whole subjects of the Gospel ministry: 1. The provision which the mercy of God made for the recovery of fallen man, "One died for all;" whence he infers, 2. "Then were all dead."

III. The end he had in view, and which he hoped and expected to obtain, by insisting on these truths wherever he went: "That they which live should not, henceforth, live to themselves, but to him who died for them and rose again."

I. The love of Christ was the apostle's chief motive; it constrained him, συνεχει; bore him along, like a torrent, in defiance of labour, hardship, and opposition. Many of us know the force of love in social life, and feel a readiness to do, bear, or forbear much for those whom we greatly love. But there is no love to be compared with the love of Christ. He is the brightness of the Father's glory,‡ the express image of his person, God manifest in the flesh; all things were created by him, and for him; for, this high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity,§ in the fulness of time assumed our nature into personal union with himself, was born of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those that were under the law, that sinners, believing in his name, might not only escape deserved condemnation, but might receive the adoption of sons.‖ For this great purpose he emptied himself; and, though in the form of God, he appeared on earth in the form of a servant; submitted to a state of poverty, reproach, and opposition; was despised and rejected of men, lived a suffering life, and terminated his sufferings by a cruel and ignominious death; for he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.¶ Therefore

* 2 Cor. v. 11. Rom. xii. 1. † 1 Tim. iv. 16. ‡ Heb. i. 3. 1 Tim. iii. 16.
§ Isaiah, lvii. 15. ‖ Gal. iv. 4, 5. ¶ Phil. ii. 8.

God highly exalted his human nature, and has given him a name above every name. The Lamb, once upon the cross, is now the Lamb upon the throne, possessing and exercising all power in heaven and on earth. Yet he is still mindful of those for whom he suffered; his heart is made of tenderness; his bowels melt with love; he appears in the presence of God for them,* as their great high priest, advocate, and intercessor. By his holy word he invites, and by the power of his Holy Spirit he draws, and encourages, and enables the weary and heavy-laden to come unto him for rest. He declares, that they who apply to him, he will *in no wise* cast out; and he promises to save them *to the uttermost*;† to support and guide them safely through all their conflicts, temptations and trials, while they are here; to lead them safely through the dark valley of the shadow of death; and then to receive them to himself, that they may be ever with him to behold his glory.‡

Such is the love of Christ; or rather, we may be ashamed of the faintness of our conceptions of his love. When we attempt to consider the glory of his divine person, the depth of his humiliation, the unknown sorrows and agonies which wrung his heart in Gethsemane and on mount Golgotha, and that he endured all this for his enemies, even for those whose hearts were, both by nature and habit, alienated from him, the power he exerts in reconciling them to himself, the blessings he bestows upon them in this life, when they are renewed by his grace, and the eternal happiness he has prepared for them in a future state—I say, when we attempt to conceive of this love, in its origin, progress, and effects, we are soon overwhelmed, our thoughts are swallowed up, and we can only wonder and adore in silence. This love of Christ to sinners is inexpressible; unsearchable, and passing knowledge; it is an ocean without either bottom or shore.

They who have obtained mercy, who know, and love, and trust him, have likewise their peculiar and appropriate reasons for admiring his love. They often reflect on what they were doing, and whither they were going, when he first touched their hearts and made them willing to receive him as their prophet, priest, and king. They are sensible that, if they had died in their ignorance, they must have been lost for ever: and, while they see many of their fellow-creatures, no worse by nature than themselves, who live in the world without God, and without Christ, and who die, it is to be feared, without any solid ground of hope, they rejoice, with trembling, for that undeserved and unsought mercy, which preserved them from going down into the pit of destruction, when their sins were unpardoned, and their hearts unhumbled. They

* Heb. ix. 24. † John, vi. 37. Heb. vii. 25. ‡ John, xvii. 24.

confess that they were barren tress in God's vineyard; and, though he had a right to expect fruit from them, and waited year after year, he found none. Why then were they not cut down as cumberers of the ground? It was owing to the gracious interposition of the Great Mediator whom they had long disregarded. Thus, as we have observed, it was with our apostle. The pride of his heart, and the prejudices of his education, had fired him with rage against the cause and the people of the Lord. He seems to have been no less active and furious in opposing them than Herod. But Herod was suddenly cut off, and devoured by worms; whereas Paul of Tarsus, who had done much mischief, while meditating more, was suddenly convinced, humbled, and pardoned. We cannot wonder that the love of Christ was the constraining motive of his conduct from that time to the end of his life.

Oh, that we all knew the need and the worth of this Saviour! Then we should all love him! This will be the deciding point at last. St. Paul, writing by inspiration of God, says, in one place, "Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."* In another place, under the same influence, he denounces an awful sentence against those who love him not: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema."† This was by no means the apostle's wish; he would willingly have been made an anathema himself, after the manner of Christ,‡ if he could thereby procure the salvation of his enemies who sought his life in every place. But he declared the will of God, that if any man, who hears, or might hear, the record that God has given of his Son, refuses to love and serve him, and lives and dies a stranger to his love, he must, he will, be accursed! for,

II. He is the One, the mighty One, who died for all. The sacrifices, which were types of his appearance in the fulness of time to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, were appropriated for the instruction and consolation of the people of Israel. But now the partition-wall is broken down. This distinction between Jew and Gentile is removed. Jesus died, that all, of every age and nation, whether high or low, rich or poor, bond or free, who, to the ends of the earth, and to the end of time, should believe in his name, might live through him. As the sun, his great visible emblem, fills every eye with his light, and would do so, were they as numerous as the leaves upon the trees, or the blades of grass in the fields, without the least diminution of his effulgence; so this Lord God, our Saviour, the sun of the intellectual world, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Wherever the word of his Gospel is known, he makes it his power to the salvation of all

* Ephes. vi. 24. † 1 Cor. xvi. 22. ‡ Rom. ix. 3.

who believe on him. The value and efficacy of his atonement and righteousness are inexhaustible. It is true, the blind are in darkness at noon-day; but this Sun of Righteousness not only affords light to those who can see, but gives sight to the blind. He invites all to come to him for relief; but many refuse to apply. They prefer darkness to light, because their deeds are evil. But all who seek him, and wait for him, in the way of his appointment, are graciously accepted; they receive their sight; they look to him, and are saved. He has declared, Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out, whatever their former characters or conduct may have been; but they who, though repeatedly wooed and warned, will not come, if they persist in their obstinacy, must perish in unbelief; for he is sovereign in the dispensation of his grace.

If One, if *this* One, the only-beloved Son of God, died thus for all; if the Lord of Glory humbled himself to assume our nature, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; it surely must be for some very important design, worthy of himself, and which he alone was able to accomplish. The apostle briefly states the necessity and urgency of the case, by way of inference: If one died for all, then were all dead. The Scripture abundantly declares the state of fallen man, of all mankind, to be a state of death. We are all, by nature, dead in a twofold sense; dead in *law*, and dead in *sin*.

When a criminal has been tried, convicted, and condemned to death in a court of justice, we speak of him as a dead man, though the sentence be not yet executed, and the king has the prerogative of pardoning him, if he is pleased to exercise mercy. We indeed compare great things with small, when we attempt to illustrate the proceedings of God with men, by the usages which obtain among ourselves; yet, in some respects, they are often apposite, and the Scripture teaches us by them.

As we are rational creatures, capable of knowing our Maker, and our dependence upon him for life, and breath, and all things; we are bound to love God with all our hearts; to devote our strength, power, and faculties to his service, to obey his commands, to avoid whatever is contrary to his known will, to believe his promises, and to seek our happiness in his favour. This is the law of our nature; it is, indeed, the law of all created intelligences, whether angels or men. When God created man upright, in his own image, this obedience and submission, and a disposition to seek his supreme delight in his Maker, were as natural to him as it is for a fish to swim or a bird to fly. But this law we have broken. We are now depraved, and fallen from our original righteousness. We are now in a state of rebellion against God.

We renounce his authority, violate his commands, are governed by our own will, and seek our own pleasure and glory, distinct from, and in opposition to the will and glory of our Creator! The law which we have broken is holy, just, and good;* and, therefore, the sentence of condemnation denounced against the transgressors is righteous. We come into the world devoid of all real goodness, and with a propensity to every evil. The carnal mind is enmity against God. The heart of man, of all mankind universally, is deceitful and desperately wicked; the thoughts of men, when compared with the holy law, are evil, only evil, and that continually.† Thus we are in a state of condemnation; by nature, children of wrath. But we, through the mercy and long-suffering of God, are favoured with a respite. The just sentence is not yet executed; and the Gospel points out a way of escape and deliverance. For this purpose God sent forth his Son, that whosoever believeth in him might be saved; but he that believeth not is condemned already.‡

We are likewise dead in sin. We partake, with the brute creation, in the animal life, but are highly distinguished from them by the rational life. There is likewise a spiritual life, of which our first parent was originally possessed, but he soon lost it. In this sense, when he sinned against God, he died instantly. What the poet ascribes to Beelzebub, is true of man; he still retains some marks of his pristine greatness; he is majestic, though in ruins; he is alive as to the concerns of this world, and his attempts and success give indications of his native dignity; the sciences and the fine arts exhibit proofs of his genius and ability: he undertakes to measure the earth, to weigh the air, and almost to number and marshal the stars. What discoveries have been made in geometry, natural history, and chemistry! What powers are displayed in architecture, sculpture, painting, poetry, and music! But with respect to the concerns of his immortal soul, and the great realities of the unseen world, man, by nature, is dead as a stone. The dead body of Lazarus was not more incapable of performing the functions of common life than we, by nature, are of performing one spiritual act, or even of feeling one spiritual desire; till He who, by his commanding word, raised Lazarus from the grave,§ is pleased, by the power of his Holy Spirit, to raise us from the death of sin unto a new life of righteousness. He who, we profess to believe, will one day come to be our judge, has assured us, that except a man be born again, he cannot even see the kingdom of God.‖ He has no faculty suited to the perception of what belongs either to the kingdom of grace upon earth, or what is revealed of the kingdom of glory in heaven. The result of his closest rea-

* Rom. vii. 12. † Rom. viii. 7. Jer. xvii. 9. Gen. vi. 5. ‡ John, iii. 18.
§ John, xi. 43. ‖ John, iii. 3.

sonings, and shrewdest conjectures upon these subjects, leave him in utter ignorance and darkness. As no description can communicate an idea of sunshine or the colours of a rainbow to a man born blind, so the natural man cannot discern the things of God, for they can only be spiritually discerned.*

But Jesus died and rose again. As our surety, he sustained the curse of the law to deliver us from condemnation; and when he ascended on high, to appear in the presence of God for us, he received gifts for rebellious man, eminently the gift of the holy Spirit, that the Lord God might dwell among them.† Thus the promise the Lord made by the prophet Ezekiel is fulfilled, "I will put my Spirit within you;‡ and then they who before were dead, begin to live.

A load of guilt and depravity lies, unfelt, upon the dead sinner; but, when he receives the priciple of a new life, he groans, being burdened. The eyes of his understanding are opened. New, and, till then, unthought-of objects, press upon his notice. The views he now has of God, of himself, and of eternity, would overwhelm him, if he was not warranted and enabled to look to Jesus§ as an all-sufficient and gracious Saviour. From that hour he lives indeed! his sins are pardoned, his fears dispelled, his heart beats with love and gratitude. Old things are passed away, and all things are become new. He now lives no more to himself, but to him who died for him and rose again.

III. This was what the apostle aimed at, and expected as the result and the reward of his labours, that the love of Him who died for all might constrain those who live, to live no more to themselves, but to Him.

When the sinner, who was too long governed by the mean and narrow principle of self, is enabled to believe in Jesus for salvation, he feels the force of the apostle's words, Ye are bought with a price, ye are no longer your own: therefore glorify God with your body and your spirit, which are his.‖ This thought expands his mind and elevates his aims. So far as his faith is in exercise he is constrained by love, inspired by gratitude, and animated by confidence and hope, to live no more to himself, but to Him who loved him, and gave himself for him. He is now the devoted servant of his Lord, is governed by his precepts and example, and employs his time, talents, and influence, to promote the welfare of his fellow-creatures for the Lord's sake.

His new principles have this effect upon him in whatever situation the providence of God places him. If he be poor, they teach him contentment, frugality, and industry; if rich, he is moderate, condescending, and bountiful, and ready for every good work, ei-

*1 Cor. ii. 14. †Ps. lxviii. 18. ‡Ezek. xxxvi. 27. §Isa. xlv. 22. ‖1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

ther to promote the knowledge of the Gospel, or to relieve the necessitous. The golden, plain, and comprehensive rule, of doing to others as he could reasonably wish others, in similar cases, would do unto him, is inwrought in the very temper and habit of his mind. In a word, the true Christian, whether in public or in private life, whether a husband or a wife, a parent or a child, a master or a servant; whether possessed of rank and wealth, or appointed by the providence of God to sweep the street for his subsistence, in all stations and circumstances, is ambitious to let his light shine before men, for the honour of God; and to be filled with those fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to his praise and glory.

Should these effects of the constraining love of Christ be disputed by persons of any candour, we could, degenerate as the present times are, refer them to living instances. We can point out to them persons who once were a burden to themselves, a terror to their families, a nuisance to their connexions, who, by receiving the truths of the Gospel, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and by feeling the constraining love of Christ, are, in all these respects, become new creatures. And I little doubt that there are those now before me, to whom I may say, Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

What shall we then say of the attempts of modern philosophers, so called, who, if they could prevail by spreading the gloomy sophisms of infidelity, would deprive mankind of that light and comfort of which the holy Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is the only source? But, as the raging waves of the sea, in a storm, make no impression upon the rock against which they successively dash themselves into foam, and die away at its foot, so their most subtle, laboured, and malignant efforts to suppress the glorious Gospel of the blessed God† will only issue in their own confusion. *Magna est veritas, et prevalebit.* Truth will triumph over all opposition. The church of God, composed of all the living members of that body of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the living head, is founded upon a rock, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. There will always be a people, who, animated by a sense of the constraining love of Christ, will bear testimony to the power of his grace, and give evidence, by the general tenour of their conduct in life, their patience and peace in affliction, their love to their fellow-creatures, and their joyful hopes of immortality when flesh and heart are fainting, that they have neither followed cunningly devised fables, nor amused themselves with empty notions of truth.

* 1 Cor. vi. 11. † 1 Tim. i. 11.

It is upon this ground that I am encouraged to solicit your liberal assistance to the school of Langbourn Ward. I seldom say much upon these occasions, having had repeated proofs of the generosity of my stated auditory, and no reason to doubt the good will and concurrence of the rest of my hearers. Let the sight of the children before you plead in their behalf. The institution I am now to recommend will, I hope, preserve these children, and many more in succession, from those habits of idleness, intemperance, and profligacy, which too frequently mark the character of those who are destitute of instruction and education in their early years. By the benefit of our public charity-schools, and particularly of this, many boys have been trained up to honesty, sobriety, and usefulness, who might otherwise have been nuisances to society; and some have not only obtained a good character as apprentices and servants, but, by their integrity and industry, have reputably risen to affluence and influence. Could all the children of the poor be thus cared for, be taught the first principles of religion, and habituated to respect the Lord's Day, and to attend on public worship, it is probable that the number of depredators who infest our streets and roads, or break into houses, and end their unhappy lives on the gallows, would be much diminished.

The awful times in which we live, render these institutions peculiarly worthy of attention and encouragement. I cannot speak positively from my own knowledge, but I have reason to believe that the abettors of the French principles of infidelity and anarchy have seminaries where children, of all descriptions, find ready and welcome admission. It is even said that they are paid for their attendance. It is, however, certain, that a spirit of insubordination, and a defiance of all laws, human or divine, have rapidly spread, and are still rapidly spreading, among the lower classes of our people. The liberty and equality inculcated in these schools is not like that which, under our mild and equitable laws, gives every person an equal advantage for rising in life, by the proper and diligent improvement of his talents; but is adapted to confound all order and distinction, and to reduce us to the common level of a savage and barbarous state. It is therefore the common interest of all, and especially of persons of property, to exert themselves in their places to counteract this baneful design.

But I have a higher consideration to propose to you, who know the worth of souls, and have felt the power of the constraining love of Christ.

When a child is born that is heir to a title or a great fortune, it usually causes much joy to the family, and much congatulation from their friends. The birth of poor children is less noticed; but the birth of any child, whether of a prince or a pauper, is an event of great, yea, of equal importance, if we form our judgment

by the standard of the unerring word of God: when a child is born, a new existence begins, which will never end. The present life of the children before you is precarious, but their souls are, by God's constitution and appointment, immortal. Perhaps you may see them no more upon earth, but you will surely meet them again at the great day, when you, and I, and they, must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Though education alone cannot convert them, it is in the number of those means which God has enjoined us to use, and which he has promised to bless for that purpose. Happy are they who are instrumental in saving a soul from death! Happy and honoured will you be, from a sense of his love, who, when he was rich, made himself poor for your sakes,* you, according to your abilities, imitate his example, in promoting the welfare of your fellow-creatures. You may do much in this way, by contributing to the instruction of poor children, and thereby shielding them from the snares and temptations to which ignorant and neglected youth are exposed. You know not but, in the day of final award, some of these children may stand with you on the right hand of our Saviour and Judge, and you may hear him say, Inasmuch as you did it to the least of these, ye did it unto me!†

Thus much in behalf of the school. But my heart is too much impressed by the sight of this numerous and respectable auditory, and by my sincere regard for the true happiness of every individual before me, to permit me to conclude till I have addressed you on a subject of more general concern. I am not preaching to Jews or Mahometans, but to professed Christians. I am willing to take it for granted, that we all agree in acknowledging that the Scripture, the whole Scripture, is a revelation of the will of God. I hope there is not a person here, however immersed in the business, or drawn aside by the amusements and pleasures, of the world, who, if he were desired to throw the Bible, with deliberation and contempt, into the fire, would not be shocked at the proposal. I think he would say, If I have not paid that attention to the Bible which it deserves, yet surely I am not so wicked and presumptuous as to burn it. But permit me to ask you, in love. If it be indeed the word of God, why have you not paid that attention to it which it deserves? The same reasons, which would deter you from wilfully throwing it into the fire, should induce you to study it carefully, to make it the foundation of your hope and the rule of your life; for, if it be indeed the word of God, it is the rule by which your characters will be decided, and your everlasting state fixed, according to the tenour of the Gospel, which proclaims salvation to all who have repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and to those only.

* 2 Cor. viii. 9. † Matt. xxv. 40.

It is painful to a serious mind to observe how much the Bible is neglected. I have known some *great houses* in which this book could not be found. In others, if it has a place in the library, it is seldom removed from the shelf. Perhaps there is no book so little read, understood, or regarded as the book of God, by multitudes who are not unwilling to be called Christians. What an affront is this to the Almighty! A message from the king, or an act of parliament, engages the attention of those who are interested in the subject-matter, while the revealed will of God, our Creator, compared with whom all the kings, nations, and inhabitants of the earth, are but as a drop of water to the sea, or the small dust upon a balance, is treated with indifference; though every person who can have access to it, is deeply and equally interested in its contents. Should there be but a few of my hearers who, through their engagements and pursuits in life, have hitherto been remiss and negligent in acquainting themselves with the principal facts and truths recorded in the Bible, neither my conscience nor my compassion will permit me to close my discourse till I have briefly expostulated with them; as it is possible I may never have another opportunity, and perhaps the providence of God has brought them hither this morning for their good.

Whatever difference of opinion there may be amongst us in other respects, we are universally agreed as to the certainty of death and the uncertainty of life. We are sure that all must die; and, after death, if the Scriptures be true, we must appear before God in judgment. Nor have we any warrant to assure ourselves that we shall live to the end of the present year, or even week. "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."* We often read or hear of sudden deaths, and sometimes of those who, after a lingering illness, die as suddenly, to their own apprehensions of the event, as if they had died by a flash of lightning. It is no less a proof than a fruit of that depravity which the Scripture charges upon the whole human race, that men, who are so active and solicitous in managing the temporal, transient affairs of time, to promote what they conceive most to their advantage, should be totally indifferent to what may be their allotment in a state unchangeable and eternal!

Permit me briefly to remind you, that the Scripture concludes us all under sin, and exposed to the just displeasure of our Great Creator, Proprietor, Lawgiver, and Benefactor. He formed us for himself, and gave a thirst and capacity for happiness which only himself can satisfy. Our relation to Him, as intelligent creatures, who live, move, and have our being in Him, and cannot subsist a moment without Him, binds us to love Him supremely, to

* Prov. xxvii. 1.

devote all our powers and faculties to his service. This is the law of our nature. This law we have broken; we all of us have lived too long, and some of us are still living, without God in the world. We have made our own will and our own gratification the rule and end of our conduct, instead of his will and glory. We have incurred the penalty annexed to the breach of this law. We are sinners: the wages of sin is death, and the extent of that sentence is everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. How shall we escape? What shall we do to be saved?

To those who are sensible of their desert and danger, the Gospel points out relief and a refuge. Jesus invites the weary and burdened sinner, and says, "Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out." You have heard something of his glorious person, power, authority, and love. He is able, he is willing, he has promised to save, to the uttermost, all that come to God by Him. Oh that to-day you may hear his voice, and comply with his invitation! If you cordially receive the record which God has, by his own voice from heaven, given, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!" He will, for his sake, be well pleased with you; if you approve of this way of salvation, in which justice and mercy harmonize, which ascribes all the glory to God, teaches us to hate sin, and inspires the love of holiness, as essential to happiness, then this Saviour, and all the fulness of his salvation, will assuredly be yours. You will then renounce every other hope, you will no longer trust or boast in yourselves, but you will have a good warrant to boast and glory in your Saviour, and to say, In the Lord I have righteousness and strength. The Lord is my shepherd, therefore I shall not want, I need not fear; he will support me by his arm, cheer me with his presence, protect me by his power, guide me by his counsels, and afterwards receive me to glory!

THOUGHTS

UPON THE

African Slave-Trade.

MATTHEW, vii. 12.

All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

HOMO SUM —

THOUGHTS

UPON THE

AFRICAN SLAVE-TRADE.

THE nature and effects of that unhappy and disgraceful branch of commerce, which has long been maintained on the coast of Africa, with the sole and professed design of purchasing our fellow-creatures, in order to supply our West-India islands, and the American colonies, when they were ours, with slaves, is now generally understood. So much light has been thrown upon the subject by many able pens; and so many respectable persons have already engaged to use their utmost influence for the suppression of a traffic which contradicts the feelings of humanity, that it is hoped this stain of our national character will be soon wiped out.

If I attempt, after what has been done, to throw my mite into the public stock of information, it is less from an apprehension that my interference is necessary, than from a conviction that silence, at such time and on such an occasion, would, in me be criminal. If my testimony should not be necessary or serviceable, yet, perhaps, I am bound in conscience to take shame to myself by a public confession, which, however sincere, comes too late to prevent or repair the misery and mischief to which I have, formerly, been accessary.

I hope it will always be a subject of humiliating reflection to me, that I was once an active instrument in a business at which my heart now shudders. My headstrong passions and follies plunged me, in early life, into a succession of difficulties and hardships, which, at length, reduced me to seek a refuge among the natives of Africa. There, for about the space of eighteen months, I was, in effect, though without the name, a captive, and a slave myself; and was depressed to the lowest degree of human wretchedness. Possibly I should not have been so completely miserable, had I lived among the natives only, but it was my lot to reside with white men; for at that time several persons of my own colour and language were settled upon that part of the Windward coast which lies between Sierra Leone and Cape Mount; for the purpose of purchasing and collecting slaves, to sell to the vessels that arrived from Europe.

This is a bourn from which few travellers return who have once determined to venture upon a temporary residence there; but the good providence of God, without my expectation, and almost against my will, delivered me from those scenes of wickedness and wo; and I arrived at Liverpool in May 1748. I soon revisited the place of my captivity, as mate of a ship, and, in the year 1750, I was appointed commander; in which capacity I made three voyages to the Windward coast for slaves.

I first saw the coast of Guinea, in the year 1745, and took my last leave of it in 1754. It was not, intentionally, a farewell; but, through the mercy of God, it proved so. I fitted out for a fourth voyage, and was upon the point of sailing, when I was arrested by a sudden illness, and I resigned the ship to another captain.

Thus I was unexpectedly freed from this disagreeable service. Disagreeable I had long found it; but I think I should have quitted it sooner, had I considered it as I now do, to be unlawful and wrong. But I never had a scruple upon this head at the time; nor was such a thought once suggested to me by any friend. What I did I did ignorantly; considering it as the line of life which divine providence had allotted me, and having no concern in point of conscience, but to treat the slaves while under my care, with as much humanity as a regard to my own safety would admit.

The experience and observation of nine years, would qualify me for being a competent witness upon this subject, could I safely trust to the report of memory, after an interval of more than thirty-three years. But in the course of so long a period, the ideas of past scenes and transactions grow indistinct; and I am aware, that what I have seen, and what I have only heard related, may, by this time, have become so insensibly blended together, that, in some cases, it may be difficult for me, if not impossible, to distinguish them with absolute certainty. It is, however, my earnest desire, and will therefore engage my utmost care, that I may offer nothing in writing, as from my own knowledge, which I could not cheerfully, if requisite, confirm upon oath.

That part of the African shore, which lies between the river Sierra Leone, lat. 8° 30′ N. and Cape Palmas, is usually known by the name of the Windward, or Grain Coast. The extent (if my recollection does not fail me) is about one hundred and fifty leagues. There is a fort upon Benee Island, in Sierra Leone, which formerly belonged to the old African Company: they also had a fort on an island in the river Sherbro; but the former was in private hands, and of the latter, scarcely the foundations were visible when I first went to Africa. There is no fort or factory

upon this coast, under the sanction of our government; but there were, as I have said, and probably still are, private traders resident at Benee Island, at the Bananoes, and at the Plantanes. The former of these is about twelve, and the latter twenty leagues, from Sierra Leone to the south-east.

By these persons the trade is carried on, in boats and shallops, thirty or forty leagues to the northward, in several rivers lying within the shoals of Rio Grande. But the most northerly place of trade for shipping is Sierra Leone, and the business there, and in that neighbourhood, is chiefly transacted with the white men; but from Sherbro to Cape Palmas, directly with the natives. Though I have been on the Gold Coast, and beyond it as far as Cape Lopez, in the latitnde of one or two degrees south, I profess no knowledge of the African trade, but as it was conducted on the Windward Coast when I was concerned in it.

I am not qualified, and if I were, I should think it rather unsuitable to my present character as a minister of the Gospel, to consider the African Slave-Trade merely in a political light. This disquisition more properly belongs to persons in civil life. Only thus far my character as a minister will allow and perhaps require me to observe, that the best human policy is that which is connected with a reverential regard to Almighty God, the supreme governor of the earth. Every plan which aims at the welfare of a nation, in defiance of his authority and laws, however apparently wise, will prove to be essentially defective, and, if persisted in, ruinous. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and he has engaged to plead the cause and vindicate the wrongs of the oppressed. It is righteousness that exalteth a nation! and wickedness is the present reproach, and will, sooner or later, unless repentance intervene, prove the ruin of any people. Perhaps what I have said of myself may be applicable to the nation at large. The slave-trade was always unjustifiable; but inattention and interest prevented, for a time, the evil from being perceived. It is otherwise at present; the mischiefs and evils connected with it have been, of late years, represented with such undeniable evidence, and are now so generally known, that I suppose there is hardly an objection can be made to the wish of thousands, perhaps of millions, for the suppression of this trade, but upon the ground of political expedience.

Though I were even sure that a principal branch of the public revenue depended upon the African trade, (which I apprehend is far from being the case,) if I had access and influence, I should think myself bound to say to government, to Parliament, and

to the nation, "It is not lawful to put it into the treasury, because it is the price of blood."*

I account an intelligent farmer to be a good politician in this sense; that if he has a large heap of good corn, he will not put a small quantity, that is damaged, to the rest, for the sake of increasing the heap. He knows that such an addition would spoil the whole. God forbid that any supposed profit or advantage which we can derive from the groans, and agonies, and blood, of the poor Africans, should draw down his heavy curse upon all that we might, otherwise, honourably and comfortably possess.

For the sake of method, I could wish to consider the African trade—first, with regard to the effect it has upon our own people; and, secondly, as it concerns the blacks, or, as they are more contemptuously styled, the negro slaves, whom we purchase upon the coast. But these two topics are so interwoven together, that it will not be easy to keep them exactly separate.

I. The first point I shall mention is surely of political importance, if the lives of our fellow-subjects be so; and if a rapid loss of seamen deserves the attention of a maritime people. This loss in the African trade is truly alarming. I admit that many of them are cut off in their first voyage, and consequently, before they can properly rank as seamen; though they would have been seamen if they had lived. But the neighbourhood of our sea-ports is continually drained of men and boys to supply the places of those who die abroad; and if they are not all seamen, they are all our brethren and countrymen, subjects of the British government.

The people who remain on ship-board, upon the coast, if not accustomed to the climate, are liable to the attack of an inflammatory fever, which is not often fatal unless the occurrence of unfavourable circumstances makes it so. When this danger is over, I think they might probably be as healthy as in most other voyages, provided they could be kept from sleeping in the dews, from being much exposed to the rain, from the intemperate use of spirits, and especially from women.

But, considering the general disposition of our sailors, and the nature of the slave-trade, these provisos are of little more significance than if I should say, upon another occasion, that Great Britain would be a happy country, *provided* all the inhabitants were wise and good. The sailors *must be* much exposed to the weather; especially on the Windward coast, where a great part of the cargo is procured by boats, which are often sent to the distance of thirty or forty leagues, and are sometimes a month be-

* Matt. xxvii. 6.

fore they return. Many vessels arrive upon the coast before the rainy season (which continues from about May to October) is over; and if trade be scarce, the ships which arrive in the fair or dry season, often remain till the rains return, before they can complete their purchase. A proper shelter from the weather, in an open boat, when the rain is incessant, night and day, for weeks and months, is impracticable.

I have, myself, in such a boat, been five or six days together, without, as we say, a dry thread about me, sleeping or waking. And, during the fair season, tornadoes, or violent storms of wind, thunder, and heavy rain, are very frequent, though they seldom last long. In fact, the boats seldom return without bringing some of the people ill of dangerous fevers or fluxes, occasioned either by the weather, or by unwholesome diet, such as the crude fruits and palm wine, with which they are plentifully supplied by the natives.

Strong liquors, such as brandy, rum, or English spirits, the sailors cannot often procure in such quantities as to hurt them; but they will if they can; and opportunities sometimes offer, especially to those who are in boats: for strong liquor being an article much in demand, so that without it scarcely a single slave can be purchased, it is always at hand. And if what is taken from the casks or bottles that are for sale, be supplied with water, they are as full as they were before. The blacks who buy the liquor, are the losers by the adulteration; but often the people who cheat them are the greatest sufferers.

The article of women, likewise, contributes largely to the loss of our seamen. When they are on shore, they often, from their known thoughtless imprudence, involve themselves, on this account, in quarrels with the natives, and, if not killed upon the spot, are frequently poisoned. On ship-board they may be restrained, and in some ships they are; but such restraint is far from being general. It depends much upon the disposition and attention of the captain. When I was in the trade I knew several commanders of African ships who were prudent respectable men, and who maintained a proper discipline and regularity in their vessels; but there were too many of a different character. In some ships, perhaps in the most, the license allowed, in this particular, was almost unlimited. Moral turpitude was seldom considered, but they who took care to do the ship's business, might, in other respects, do what they pleased. These excesses, if they do not induce fevers, at least render the constitution less able to support them; and lewdness, too frequently, terminates with death.

The risk of insurrection is to be added. These, I believe, are always meditated; for the men slaves are not easily reconciled to

their confinement and treatment; and, if attempted, they are seldom suppressed without considerable loss; and sometimes they succeed, to the destruction of a whole ships company at once. Seldom a year passes, but we hear of one or more such catastrophes; and we likewise hear, sometimes, of Whites and Blacks involved, in one moment, in one common ruin, by the gunpowder taking fire, and blowing up the ship.

How far the several causes I have enumerated may respectively operate, I cannot say; the fact, however, is sure, that a great number of our seamen perish in the slave-trade. Few ships, comparatively, are either blown up, or totally cut off; but some are. Of the rest I have known some that have lost half their people, and some a larger proportion. I am far from saying that it is always, or even often, thus; but, I believe I shall state the matter sufficiently low, if I suppose, that at least one fifth-part of those who go from England to the coast of Africa, in ships which trade for slaves, never return from thence. I dare not depend too much upon my memory, as to the number of ships and men employed in the slave-trade more than thirty years ago; nor do I know what has been the state of the trade since; therefore I shall not attempt to make calculations. But, as I cannot but form some opinion upon the subject, I judge it probable that the collective sum of seamen, who go from all our ports to Africa within the course of a year, (taking, Guinea in the extensive sense, from Goree or Gambia, and including the coast of Angola,) cannot be less than eight thousand; and if, upon an average of ships and seasons, a fifth part of these die, the annual loss is fifteen hundred. I believe those who have taken pains to make more exact inquiries, will deem my supposition to be very moderate.

Thus much concerning the first evil, the loss of seamen and subjects, which the nation sustains by the African slave-trade.

2. There is a second, which either is, or ought to be, deemed of importance, considered in a political light; I mean the dreadful effects of this trade upon the minds of those who are engaged in it. There are, doubtless, exceptions; and I would willingly except myself. But, in general, I know of no method of getting money, not even that of robbing for it upon the highway, which have so direct a tendency to efface the moral sense, to rob the heart of every gentle and humane disposition, and to harden it, like steel, against all impressions of sensibility.

Usually, about two-thirds of a cargo of slaves are males. When a hundred and fifty or two hundred stout men, torn from their native land, many of whom never saw the sea, much less a ship, till a short space before they are embarked: who have, probably the same natural prejudice against a white man as we

have against a black; and who often bring with them an apprehension they are bought to be eaten: I say, when thus circumstanced, it is not to be expected that they will tamely resign themselves to their situation. It is always taken for granted, that they will attempt to gain their liberty if possible. Accordingly, as we dare not trust them, we receive them on board, from the first, as enemies; and, before their number exceeds, perhaps, ten or fifteen, they are all put in irons; in most ships, two and two together. And frequently they are not thus confined, as they might most conveniently stand or move, the right hand and foot of one to the left of the other, but across; that is, the hand and foot of each on the same side, whether right or left, are fettered together: so that they cannot move either hand or foot, but with great caution, and with perfect consent. Thus they must sit, walk, and lie, for many months, (sometimes for nine or ten,) without any mitigation or relief unless they are sick.

In the night, they are confined below; in the day-time, (if the weather be fine,) they are upon deck; and as they are brought by pairs, a chain is put through a ring upon their irons, and this is likewise locked down to the ring-bolts, which are fastened at certain intervals, upon the deck. These, and other precautions, are no more than necessary; especially, as while the number of slaves increases, that of the people who are to guard them, is diminished by sickness, or death, or by being absent in the boats: so that sometimes not ten men can be mustered to watch, night and day, over two hundred, besides having all the other business of the ship to attend.

That these precautions are so often effectual, is much more to be wondered at, than that they sometimes fail. One unguarded hour, or minute, is sufficient to give the slaves the opportunity they are always waiting for. An attempt to rise upon the ship's company, brings on instantaneous and horrid war: for, when they are once in motion, they are desperate; and where they do not conquer, they are seldom quelled without much mischief and bloodshed on both sides.

Sometimes, when the slaves are ripe for an insurrection, one of them will impeach the affair; and then necessity, and the state policy, of these small but most absolute governments, enforce maxims directly contrary to the nature of things. The traitor to the cause of liberty is caressed, rewarded, and deemed an honest fellow. The patriots, who formed and animated the plan, if they can be found out, must be treated as villians, and punished, to intimidate the rest. These punishments, in their nature and degree, depend upon the sovereign will of the captain. Some are content with inflicting such moderate punishment as may suffice for an example. But unlimited power, instigated by revenge, and where

the heart, by a long familiarity with the sufferings of slaves, is become callous, and insensible to the pleadings of humanity, is terrible!

I have seen them sentenced to unmerciful whippings, continued till the poor creatures have not had power to groan under their misery, and hardly a sign of life has remained. I have seen them agonizing for hours, I believe for days together, under the torture of the thumb-screws; a dreadful engine, which, if the screw be turned by an unrelenting hand, can give intolerable anguish. There have been instances in which cruelty has proceeded still further; but, as I hope they are few, and I can mention but one from my own knowledge, I shall but mention it.

I have often heard a captain, who has been long since dead, boast of his conduct in a former voyage, when his slaves attempted to rise upon him. After he had suppressed the insurrection, he sat in judgment upon the insurgents; and not only, in cold blood, adjudged several of them, I know not how many, to die, but studied, with no small attention, how to make death as excruciating as possible. For my reader's sake I suppress the recital of particulars.

Surely it must be allowed, that they who are long conversant with such scenes as these, are liable to imbibe a spirit of ferociousness, and savage insensibility, of which human nature, depraved as it is, is not, ordinarily, capable. If these things be true, the reader will admit the possibility of a fact that was in current report when I was upon the coast, and the truth of which, though I cannot now authenticate it, I have no reason to doubt.

A mate of a ship, in a long boat, purchased a young woman, with a fine child, of about a year old, in her arms. In the night the child cried much, and disturbed his sleep. He rose up in great anger, and swore, that if the child did not cease making such a noise, he would presently silence it. The child continued to cry. At length he rose up a second time, tore the child from the mother, and threw it into the sea. The child was soon silenced indeed, but it was not so easy to pacify the woman: she was too valuable to be thrown overboard, and he was obliged to bear the sound of her lamentations till he could put her on board his ship.

I am persuaded that every tender mother, who feasts her eyes and her mind when she contemplates the infant in her arms, will commiserate the poor Africans. But why do I speak of one child, when we have heard and read a melancholy story, too notoriously true to admit of contradiction, of more than a hundred grown slaves, thrown into the sea, at one time, from on board a ship, when fresh water was scarce; to fix the loss upon the underwriters, which otherwise, had they died on board, must have fallen upon the owners of the vessel. These instances are specimens

of the spirit produced, by the African trade, in men who once were no more destitute of the milk of human kindness than ourselves.

Hitherto I have considered the condition of the men slaves only. From the women there is no danger of insurrection, and they are carefully kept from the men; I mean, from the black men. But in what I have to offer, on this head, I am far from including every ship. I speak not of what is universally, but of what is too commonly, and, I am afraid, too generally, prevalent.

I have already observed that the captain of an African ship, while upon the coast, is absolute in his command; and if he be humane, vigilant, and determined, he has it in his power to protect the miserable: for scarcely any thing can be done, on board the ship, without his permission, or connivance. But this power is too seldom exerted in favour of the poor women slaves.

When we hear of a town taken by storm, and given up to the ravages of an enraged and licentious army of wild and unprincipled cossacks, perhaps no part of the distress affects a feeling mind more than the treatment to which the women are exposed. But the enormities frequently committed in an African ship, though equally flagrant, are little known *here*, and are considered *there*, only as matters of course. When the women and girls are taken on board a ship, naked, trembling, terrified, perhaps almost exhausted with cold, fatigue, and hunger, they are often exposed to the wanton rudeness of white savages. The poor creatures cannot understand the language they hear, but the looks and manners of the speakers are sufficiently intelligible. In imagination, the prey is divided, upon the spot, and only reserved till opportunity offers. Where resistance, or refusal, would be utterly in vain, even the solicitation of consent is seldom thought of. But I forbear. This is not a subject for declamation. Facts like these, so certain and so numerous, speak for themselves. Surely, if the advocates for the Slave-Trade attempt to plead for it, before the wives and daughters of our happy land, or before those who have wives or daughters of their own, they must lose their cause.

Perhaps some hard-hearted pleader may suggest that such treatment would, indeed, be cruel in Europe; but the African women are negroes, savages, who have no idea of the nicer sensations which obtain among civilized people. I dare contradict them in the strongest terms. I have lived long, and conversed much, amongst these supposed savages. I have often slept in their towns, in a house filled with goods for trade, with no person in the house but myself, and with no other door than a mat, in that security, which no man in his senses would expect in this civilized nation, especially in this metropolis without the precaution of having strong doors, strongly locked and bolted. And with regard to the women in Sherbro, where I was most acquainted, I have seen many instances of modesty, and even delicacy, which would not disgrace

an English woman. Yet, such is the treatment which I have known permitted, if not encouraged, in many of our ships—they have been abandoned, without restraint, to the lawless will of the first comer.

Accustomed thus to despise, insult, and injure the slaves on board, it may be expected that the conduct of many of our people to the natives, with whom they trade, is, as far as circumstances admit, very similar; and it is so. They are considered as a people to be robbed and spoiled with impunity. Every art is employed to deceive and wrong them. And he who has most address in this way, has most to boast of.

Not an article that is capable of diminution or adulteration is delivered genuine, or entire. The spirits are lowered by water. False heads are put into the kegs that contain the gunpowder; so that, though the keg appears large, there is no more powder in it than in a much smaller. The linen and cotton cloths are opened, and two or three yards, according to the length of the piece, cut off, not from the end, but one out of the middle, where it is not so readily noticed.

The natives are cheated, in the number, weight, measure, or quality of what they purchase, in every possible way: and by habit and emulation, a marvellous dexterity is acquired in these practices. And thus the natives, in their turn, in proportion to their commerce with the Europeans, and (I am sorry to add) particularly with the English, become jealous, insidious, and revengeful.

They know with whom they deal, and are accordingly prepared, though they can trust some ships and boats, which have treated them with punctuality, and may be trusted by them. A quarrel sometimes furnishes pretext for detaining and carrying away one or more of the natives, which is retaliated, if practicable, upon the the next boat that comes to the place, from the same port. For so far their vindictive temper is restrained by their ideas of justice, that they will not, often, revenge an injury received from a Liverpool ship, upon one belonging to Bristol or London.

They will, usually, wait with patience the arrival of one, which, they suppose, by her sailing from the same place, has some connexion with that which used them ill: and they are so quick at distinguishing our little local differences of language and customs in a ship, that before they have been in a ship five minutes, and often before they come on board, they know with certainty, whether she be from Bristol, Liverpool, or London.

Retaliation on their parts, furnishes a plea for reprisal on ours. Thus, in one place or another, trade is often suspended, all intercourse cut off, and things are in a state of war; till necessity, either on the ship's part or on theirs, produces overtures of peace,

and dictates the price which the offending party must pay for it. But it is a warlike peace. We trade under arms; and they are furnished with long knives.

For, with a few exceptions, the English and the Africans, reciprocally, consider each other as consummate villians, who are always watching opportunities to do mischief. In short, we have, I fear, too deservedly a very unfavourable character upon the coast. When I have charged a black with unfairness and dishonesty, he has answered, if able to clear himself, with an air of disdain, "What! do you think I am a white man?"

Such is the nature, such are the concomitants, of the slave-trade; and such is the school in which many thousands of our seamen are brought up. Can we, then, wonder at that impatience of subordination, and that disposition to mutiny amongst them, which has been of late so loudly complained of, and so severely felt? Will not sound policy suggest the necessity of some expedient here? Or can sound policy suggest any effectual expedient, but the total suppression of a trade which, like a poisonous root, diffuses its malignity into every branch?

The effects which our trade has upon the blacks, those especially who come under our power, may be considered under three heads—How they are acquired. The mortality they are subject to; and, How those who survive are disposed of.

I confine my remarks on the first head to the Windward coast, and can speak most confidently of the trade in Sherbro, where I lived. I own, however, that I question, if any part of the Windward coast is equal to Sherbro, in point of regularity and government. They have no men of great power or property among them; as I am told there are upon the Gold coast, at Whida and Benin. The Sherbro people live much in the patriarchal way. An old man usually presides in each town, whose authority depends more on his years, than on his possessions: and he who is called the king, is not easily distinguished, either by state or wealth, from the rest. But the different districts, which seem to be, in many respects, independent of each other, are incorporated, and united, by means of an institution which pervades them all, and is called the Purrow. The persons of this order, who are very numerous, seem very much to resemble the Druids, who once presided in our island.

The Purrow has both the legislative and executive authority, and, under their sanction, there is a police exercised, which is by no means contemptible. Every thing belonging to the Purrow is mysterious and severe, but, upon the whole, it has very good effects; and as any man, whether bond or free, who will submit to be initiated into their mysteries, may be admitted of the order, it is a kind of commonwealth. And, perhaps, few people enjoy

more simple, political freedom, than the inhabitants of Sherbro, belonging to the Purrow, (who are not slaves,) further than they are bound by their own institutions. Private property is tolerably well secured, and violence is much suppressed.

The state of slavery among these wild, barbarous people, as we esteem them, is much milder than in our colonies. For as, on the one hand, they have no land in high cultivation, like our West India plantations, and therefore no call for that excessive, unintermitted labour, which exhausts our slaves; so, on the other hand, no man is permitted to draw blood even from a slave. If he does, he is liable to a strict inquisition; for the Purrow laws will not allow a private individual to shed blood. A man may sell his slave if he pleases; but he may not wantonly abuse him. The laws, likewise, punish some species of theft with slavery, and in cases of adultery, which are very common, as polygamy is the custom of the country, both the woman, and the man who offends with her, are liable to be sold for slaves, unless they can satisfy the husband, or unless they are redeemed by their friends.

Among these unenlightened blacks, it is a general maxim, that if a man steals, or breaks a moveable, as a musket, for instance, the offence may be nearly compensated, by putting another musket in its place; but offences which cannot be repaired in kind, as adultery, admit of no satisfaction, till the injured person declares that he is satisfied. So that, if a rich man seduces the wife of a poor man, he has it in his power to change places with him; for he may send for every article in his house, one by one, till he says, "I have enough." The only alternative, is personal slavery.

I suppose bribery and influence may have their effects in Guinea, as they have in some other countries; but their laws, in the main, are wise and good; and, upon the whole, they have considerable operation; and therefore, I believe many of the slaves purchased in Sherbro, and probably upon the whole Windward coast, are convicts, who have forfeited their liberty by breaking the laws of their country.

But I apprehend that the neighbourhood of our ships, and the desire of our goods, are motives which often push the rigours of the laws to an extreme which would not be exacted if they were left to themselves.

But slaves are the staple article of the traffic; and though a considerable number may have been born near the sea, I believe the bulk of them are brought from far. I have reason to think, that some travel more than a thousand miles before they reach the sea-coast. Whether there may be convicts amongst these likewise, or what proportion they may bear to those who are taken prisoners in war, it is impossible to know.

I judge the principal source of the slave-trade is the wars which prevail among the natives. Sometimes these wars break out between those who live near the sea. The English, or other Europeans, have been charged with fomenting them; I believe (so far as concerns the Windward coast) unjustly. That some would do it if they could, I doubt not; but I do not think they can have opportunity. Nor is it needful they should interfere. Thousands, in our own country, wish for war, because they fatten upon its spoils.

Human nature is much the same in every place, and few people will be willing to allow that the negroes in Africa are better than themselves. Supposing, therefore, they wish for European goods, may not they wish to purchase them from a ship just arrived? Of course, they must wish for slaves to go to market with; and if they have not slaves, and think themselves strong enough to invade their neighbours, they will probably wish for war. And if once they wish for it, how easy is it to find or to make pretexts for breaking an inconvenient peace; or, (after the example of greater heroes, of Christian name,) to make depredations without condescending to assign any reasons.

I verily believe that the far greater part of the wars in Africa would cease, if the Europeans would cease to tempt them, by offering goods for slaves. And though they do not bring legions into the field, their wars are bloody. I believe the captives reserved for sale are fewer than the slain.

I have not sufficient data to warrant calculation, but I suppose not less than one hundred thousand slaves are exported, annually, from all parts of Africa, and that more than one half of these are exported in English bottoms.

If but an equal number are killed in war, and if many of these wars are kindled by the incentive of selling their prisoners; what an annual accumulation of blood must there be crying against the nations of Europe concerned in this trade, and particularly against our own!

I have often been gravely told, as a proof that the Africans, however hardly treated, deserved but little compassion, that they are a people so destitute of natural affection, that it is common among them for parents to sell their children, and children their parents. And, I think, a charge of this kind is brought against them by the respectable author of *Spectacle de la Nature*. But he must have been misinformed. I never heard of one instance of either while I used the coast.

One article more upon this head, is kidnapping, or stealing free people. Some people suppose, that the ship trade is rather the stealing than the buying of slaves. But there is enough to lay to

the charge of the ships, without accusing them falsely. The slaves, in general are bought and paid for. Sometimes, when goods are lent or trusted on shore, the trader voluntarily leaves a free person, perhaps his own son, as a hostage, or pawn, for the payment; and in case of default, the hostage is carried off, and sold; which, however hard upon him, being in consequence of a free stipulation, cannot be deemed unfair. There have been instances of unprincipled captains, who, at the close of what they supposed their last voyage, and when they had no intention of revisiting the coast, have detained and carried away free people with them; and left the next ship, that should come from the same port to risk the consequences. But these actions, I hope and believe, are not common.

With regard to the natives, to steal a free man or woman, and to sell them on board a ship, would, I think, be a more difficult and more dangerous attempt in Sherbro, than in London. But I have no doubt that the traders, who come from the interior parts of Africa, at a great distance, find opportunity, in the course of their journey, to pick up stragglers, whom they may meet in their way. This branch of oppression and robbery would likewise fail, if the temptation to it were removed.

I have, to the best of my knowledge, pointed out the principal sources of that immense supply of slaves which furnishes so large an exportation every year. If all that are taken on board the ships were to survive the voyage, and be landed in good order, possibly the English, French, and Dutch islands and colonies, would be soon overstocked, and fewer ships would sail to the coast. But a large abatement must be made for mortality. After what I have already said of their treatment, I shall now, that I am again to consider them on board the ships, confine myself to this point.

In the Portuguese ships, which trade from Brazil to the Gold coast and Angola, I believe a heavy mortality is not frequent. The slaves have room, they are not put in irons, (I speak from information only,) and are humanely treated.

With our ships, the great object is to be full. When the ship is there, it is thought desirable she should take as many as possible. The cargo of a vessel of a hundred tons, or little more, is calculated to purchase from two hundred and twenty to two hundred and fifty slaves. Their lodging-rooms below the deck, which are three, (for the men, the boys, and the women,) besides a place for the sick, are sometimes more than five feet high, and sometimes less; and this height is divided towards the middle, for the slaves lie in two rows, one above the other, on each side of the ship, close to each other, like books upon a shelf. I have known them so close, that the shelf

would not easily contain one more. And I have known a white man sent down among the men to lay them in these rows to the greatest advantage, so that as little space as possible might be lost.

Let it be observed, that the poor creatures, thus cramped for want of room, are likewise in irons, for the most part both hands and feet, and two together, which makes it difficult for them to turn or move, to attempt either to rise or to lie down, without hurting themselves or each other. Nor is the motion of the ship, especially her healing, or stoop on one side, when under sail, to be omitted; for this, as they lie athwart, or cross the ship, adds to the uncomfortableness of their lodging, especially to those who lie on the leeward or leaning side of the vessel.

Dire is the tossing, deep the groans.—

The heat and smell of these rooms, when the weather will not admit of the slaves being brought upon deck, and of having their rooms cleaned every day, would be almost insupportable to a person not accustomed to them. If the slaves and the rooms can be constantly aired, and they are not detained too long on board, perhaps there are not many die; but the contrary is often their lot. They are kept down by the weather, to breathe a hot and corrupted air, sometimes for a week: this, added to the galling of their irons, and the despondency which seizes their spirits when thus confined, soon becomes fatal. And every morning, perhaps more instances than one are found, of the living and the dead, like the captives of Mezentius, fastened together.

Epidemical fevers and fluxes, which fill the ship with noisome and noxious effluvia, often break out, and infect the seamen likewise, and thus the oppressors and oppressed, fall by the same stroke. I believe nearly one half of the slaves on board have, sometimes, died; and that the loss of a third part, in these circumstances, is not unusual. The ship in which I was mate left the coast with two hundred and eighteen slaves on board; and though we were not much affected by epidemical disorders, I find, by my journal of that voyage, (now before me,) that we buried sixty-two on our passage to South Carolina, exclusive of those which died before we left the coast, of which I have no account.

I believe, upon an average between the more healthy and the more sickly voyages, and including all contingencies, one fourth of the whole purchase may be allotted to the article of mortality: that is, if the English ships purchase *sixty thousand slaves* annually, upon the whole extent of the coast, the annual loss of lives cannot be much less than *fifteen thousand*.

I am now to speak of the survivors. When the ships make

the land, (usually the West-India islands,) and have their port in view, after having been four, five, six weeks, or a longer time, at sea, (which depends much upon the time that passes before they can get into the permanent trade-winds, which blow from the north-east and east, across the Atlantic,) then, and not before, they venture to release the men slaves from their irons: and then the sight of the land, and their freedom from long and painful confinement, usually excite in them a degree of alacrity, and a transient feeling of joy.

The prisoner leaps to lose his chains.

But this joy is short-lived indeed. The condition of the unhappy slaves is in a continual progress from bad to worse. Their case is truly pitiable from the moment they are in a state of slavery in their own country; but it may be deemed a state of ease and liberty, compared with their situation on board our ships.

Yet, perhaps, they would wish to spend the remainder of their days on ship-board, could they know, beforehand, the nature of the servitude which awaits them on shore; and that the dreadful hardships and sufferings they have already endured, would to the most of them, only terminate in excessive toil, hunger, and the excruciating tortures of the cart-whip, inflicted at the caprice of an unfeeling overseer, proud of the power allowed him of punishing whom, and when, and how he pleases.

I hope the slaves in our islands are better treated now, than they were at the time when I was in the trade. And, even, then, I know there were slaves, who under the care and protection of humane masters, were comparatively happy. But I saw and heard enough to satisfy me that their condition, in general, was wretched to the extreme. However, my stay in Antigua and St. Christopher's (the only islands I visited) was too short to qualify me for saying much, from my own certain knowledge, upon this painful subject. Nor is it needful:—enough has been offered by several respectable writers, who have had opportunity of collecting surer and fuller information.

One thing I cannot omit, which was told me by the gentleman to whom my ship was consigned, at Antigua, in the year 1751, and who was himself a planter. He said that calculations had been made, with all possible exactness, to determine which was the preferable, that is, the more saving method of managing slaves:

> "Whether to appoint them moderate work, plenty of pro-
> "vision, and such treatment as might enable them to
> "protract their lives to old age?" Or,

"By rigourously straining their strength to the utmost,
"with little relaxation, hard fate, and hard usage,
"to wear them out before they became useless, and
"unable to do service; and then to buy new ones to
"fill up their places?"

He further said, that these skilful calculators had determined in favour of the latter mode, as much the cheaper; and that he could mention several estates, in the island of Antigua, on which it was seldom known that a slave had lived above nine years.—*Ex pede Herculem!*

When the slaves are landed for sale, (for in the Leeward Islands they are usually sold on shore,) it may happen that after a long separation in different parts of the ship, when they are brought together in one place, some who are nearly related may recognise each other. If upon such a meeting, pleasure should be felt, it can be but momentary. The sale disperses them wide, to different parts of the island, or to different islands. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, must suddenly part again, probably to meet no more.

After a careful perusal of what I have written, weighing every paragraph distinctly, I can find nothing to retract. As it is not easy to write altogether with coolness upon this business, and especially not easy to me, who have formerly been so deeply engaged in it; I have been jealous, lest the warmth of imagination might have insensibly seduced, me to aggravate and overcharge some of the horrid features, which I have attempted to delineate, of the African trade. But, upon a strict review, I am satisfied.

I have apprised the reader that I write from memory, after an interval of more than thirty years. But, at the same time, I believe many things which I saw, heard, and felt, upon the coast of Africa, are so deeply engraven in my memory, that I can hardly forget or greatly mistake them, while I am capable of remembering any thing. I am certainly not guilty of wilful misrepresentation. And, upon the whole, I dare appeal to the Great Searcher of hearts, in whose presence I write, and before whom I, and my readers, must all shortly appear, that (with the restrictions and exceptions I have made) I have advanced nothing but what, to the best of my judgment and conscience, is true.

I have likewise written without solicitation, and simply from the motive I have already assigned; a conviction that the share I have formerly had in the trade, binds, me, in conscience, to throw what light I am able upon the subject, now it is likely to become a point of parliamentary investigation.

No one can have less interest in it than I have at present, fur-

ther than as I am interested by the feelings of humanity, and, a regard for the honour and welfare of my country.

Though unwilling to give offence to a single person, in such a cause, I ought not to be afraid of offending many, by declaring the truth. If, indeed, there can be many, whom even interest can prevail upon to contradict the common sense of mankind, by pleading for a commerce so iniquitous, so cruel, so oppressive, so destructive, as the African Slave-Trade !

AN

Address

TO THE

INHABITANTS OF OLNEY.

PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1768.

AN ADDRESS

TO THE

INHABITANTS OF OLNEY.

My Dear Friends,

Every person in the parish has a place in my heart and prayers, but I cannot speak to each of you singly. Yet I am desirous to give full proof that I watch for the welfare of your souls; and likewise, (if it be possible,) to have a witness in every conscience, that none may plead ignorance of those things which it highly concerns them to know. I hope you will receive this paper in good part as a token of my love, and read it with attention.

The great God, who appoints for all "the children of men the bounds of their habitation,"* has been pleased to fix yours in a place favoured with the light of the Gospel. This is a great and distinguishing privilege in itself; but it may be abused, and if it is, will aggravate your guilt and condemnation. "Jesus Christ crucified"† is preached among you; the foundation‡ which God himself has provided, whereon poor sinners may build their eternal hope, is set before you. You are warned of the evil of sin, of the wrath of God denounced against transgressors, and of the impossibility of being saved without that faith which, being of the operation of God, purifies the heart, "and works by love." And the great blessings of life and immortality, pardon, justification, adoption, holiness, perseverance, and eternal glory, are preached amongst you as the sure and inseparable effects of a living faith in the Son of God.§

In a little time we must all give an account of our improvement of the opportunities we are favoured with. This thought, joined to a consideration of the state of the parish, leads me to offer a word in season to each of you. Perhaps there is hardly a single person who will be more or less concerned under one or other of the following particulars.

I. If God has taught you the truths I have mentioned above, if you have faith in his Son Jesus Christ, or if, convinced of its ne-

* Acts, xvii. 26. † 1 Cor. ii. 2. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 11. § Col. ii. 12. Acts, xv. 9 Gal. v. 6.

cessity, you are humbly and diligently seeking it in the use of the means he has appointed, I may address you in the angel's language to *Mary*, "Hail thou that are highly favoured!"* For if you have this faith, you have the promise and earnest of everlasting life;† or if you account yourself but a seeker, the word of the living God is engaged for your success; for he has said, "Those who seek shall find."‡ I am persuaded that you will readily receive the word of exhortation. You are called with a "high and holy calling;"§ watch and pray, therefore, that you may be preserved from the snares of the world, and the devices of Satan. That no errors in judgment, no sinful indulgence in practice, nothing contrary to the spirituality love, gentleness, and patience, which become the Gospel of Christ, may defile your conscience, rob you of your comfort, or "cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of"‖ through your miscarriage. You are called "out of darkness into marvellous light,"¶ that by your profession God may be glorified. Therefore keep close to his word as your rule; be constant in your application at the throne of grace; attend diligently upon his public ordinances, that thus by waiting upon the Lord your strength may be renewed,** and "your light may shine before men,"†† to his praise. That justice, truth, fidelity, sobriety, and diligence, may adorn the exercise of your ordinary calling; and that you may fill up your relation in life as a master or servant, a husband or a wife, a parent or a child, in such a manner as may and will be expected from one who has "tasted that the Lord is gracious."‡‡ Beware of a worldly or selfish, a proud, peevish, or passionate spirit: if you give way to any of these evils, you will walk uncomfortably yourself, you will grieve or discourage others, and you will open the mouths of the wicked to "blaspheme that worthy name by which you are called."§§

II. But if you are one of those who account the Gospel of Christ a burden, and can hardly be brought to give it a patient hearing; what can I say to you? You are already prejudiced against all I can offer, and perhaps account me an enemy because I tell you the truth. Yet I would fain persuade you of my good will. I have no complaint to make of you upon my own account; having received no personal incivility even from those who are dissatisfied with my ministry. Though you are unwilling to hear me from the pulpit, yet let me expostulate a minute with you in this way. If I cannot prove my doctrine by the Scripture, and even by the articles and public offices of our own

* Luke, i. 28. † John, vi. 47. ‡ Matt. vii. 7. § Phil. iii. 14. 2 Tim. i. 9.
‖ 2 Pet. ii. 2. ¶ 1 Pet. ii. 9. ** Isa. xl. 31. †† Matth. v. 16.
‡‡ 1 Pet. ii. 3. §§ James, ii. 7.

church, you have reason to be displeased with me. But why will you venture to reject what you must confess may at least possibly be the truth? I am sure you cannot disprove the general subjects of my ministry, not even to the satisfaction of your own minds, if you will sit leisurely down, and examine them by the New Testament. It is, indeed, easy to turn off the inquiry with a laugh, while you are in health and good spirits; but if you can remember a time when you have been sick, and apprehensive of the approach of death, probably you then felt your confidence fail, and was not so sure of the safety of your state as you once thought yourself. Such a time will come again. If you should not be cut off by a sudden stroke, or visited with some illness which may deprive you of your senses, (which God forbid should be the case!) you must again be brought within the view of death. You must experience that untried moment, and render up your soul to the tribunal of God. O, then, beware of resting your eternal hopes upon any less authority than his Word! You may now be supported by the names and examples of men; but no teacher, or friend, or favourite author, can or will stand between you and your Judge. You may live in a crowd, but you must die alone. What you think of yourself, or what others may think of you, is of small moment; the main question is, What you are in the sight of the great Judge to whom "all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid:"* for, according to his unalterable sentence, you must stand or fall to eternity. Alas! if our Gospel is true, and you live and die a stranger to it, "it will be more tolerable in that day" for those who never heard of the name of Jesus, than for you.†

III. There are too many people amongst us who abstain from the public worship, not so much from any particular objection they have to the doctrines of the Gospel, as from an inconsiderate and worldly turn of mind, which keeps them in a general neglect of religion. I have more than once publicly lamented and testified against the shameful profanation of the Lord's day in this town. I am informed it was not thus some years ago; but the increase of every kind of wickedness (as will generally be the case where the Gospel is known and despised) seems breaking in upon us like a flood. It is with some a day "of buying and selling, of slaying oxen and killing sheep;"‡ others associate for drink and vain conversation, to the scandal of the town, the grief of all serious persons, and no less in defiance to the laws of the land, than to the commandments of God. If I could have suppressed these enormities, I would. But as I have not been able to obtain assistance and concurrence sufficient to put the statutes in force, I can only

* 1 Cor. iv. 5. † Matt. xi. 22. ‡ Isa. xxii. 13.

give notice as a minister and a watchman, that "for these things the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience."* If you, my reader, are concerned in these practices, let me entreat you to consider what you are doing. Why will you "provoke the Lord to jealousy?"† Are you stronger than he? If your whole dependence was upon what we call a great man, you durst not wilfully and publicly disobey him: and can you think it safe to trifle with the great God? Do you not know that your life, your health, the peace of your family, and the success of your industry, all depend upon him? Are you not afraid, lest by openly affronting his Majesty in profaning the day he has commanded to be kept holy, you should provoke him to send a curse upon all your concerns, and to blast your endeavours in the course of the week?‡ Every rebellion against God makes our state more desperate, sin being progressive. Have you never read, or heard, or seen, that the contempt of the Sabbath (like a breach in the bank of a river) opens the way for a long train of evils to follow? How many have made a confession to this purpose at the gallows? And how many families may be found that are as full of misery, dissention, and confusion throughout the week, as they are destitute of the fear and worship of God on the Lord's day? Alas! I shall tremble for you if you do not lay this admonition to heart: I shall fear lest you provoke the Lord to give you up to a reprobate mind, or lest, in the course of his providence, he should set some mark upon you, to teach others, by your example, that it is a dreadful thing to sin against the light.§ But though his patience should bear with you to the last, and you to the last should despise it, yet death will finally summon you to judgment, unless by his grace you are brought to repentance: though you may say, "Peace, peace, to yourself, sudden destruction will then come upon you, and you shall not be able to escape."‖

If you are one of those who do not wholly neglect the public worship of God, but accustom yourself to attend only once in the day, give me leave to ask you, or rather to desire you would ask your own conscience, whether you have a sufficient excuse for not attending twice? I know the circumstances of many families, such as sickness, young children, &c. will necessarily confine some people at home. But a due allowance for these impediments, will by no means account for the great difference between our congregations in the morning and in the afternoon of the same day. Now, if you have not a lawful hindrance to plead, consider whether the same reasons that require your presence at the public worship *once*, are not equally strong for your being there both parts of the

* Ephes. v. 6. † 1 Cor. x. 22. ‡ Haggai, i. 6—9. § Rom. ii. 4. ‖ 1 Thess. v. 3.

day. Why do you go at all? Is it not to join with others in paying homage to the great God? But by doing this *once* only, where opportunity and the example of others invite you *twice*, you contradict yourself, and act as if you thought it was sometimes your duty to join in worship, and sometimes not worth your while. Or do you go with a hope of receiving good for your souls? Why then should you at any time be willing to stay away? Perhaps the opportunity you miss might have been made peculiarly useful to you. At least the Lord may justly punish your frequent neglect, by withholding his blessing when you do attend. And this may be one reason why you have heard so long to so little purpose.

IV. It is with grief I observe how generally the word of God is disregarded amongst us, though few can plead ignorance of his will. The Scripture denounces a wo against them "who are mighty to drink strong drink,"* and against "him who urges strong drink upon his neighbour to put him to shame."† The Scripture declares, "Every one that sweareth shall be cut off with a curse."‡ These threatenings are frequently repeated in the ears of those who have not entirely cast off the very form of religion. Yet I fear intemperance, riot, and profaneness, visibly gain strength from year to year. If you *will* go on in those practices—yet remember I this day take God and your consciences to witness, that "I am pure of your blood."§ As I have forewarned you before, so I tell you again, the wrath of God hangs over you. "Except you repent you will surely perish;"‖ and it will be a great aggravation if you perish with your eyes open. Think, I beseech you, before it is too late, of that awful passage—"If there be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood, and it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he blesseth himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imaginations of my heart to add drunkenness to thirst; the Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven."¶

There is one sin too frequent in the parish, which, upon this occasion, I think it especially necessary to mention. St. Paul assures us (agreeable to many other passages of Scripture) that "whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."** *Adultery*, which implies a breach of the marriage contract, is so dreadful, so irreparable an evil, and as such, condemned even by the heathens who know not God, that I would hope none of you are chargeable with it! If you are, however you may conceal your wickedness

* Isa. v. 22. † Hab. ii. 15. ‡ Zech. v. 3. Exod. xx. 7. § Acts, xx. 26.
‖ Luke, xiii. 3, 5. ¶ Deut, xxix. 18, 19. ** Heb. xiii. 4.

from your fellow-creatures, you cannot hide it from God; his eye is upon you, and his justice will surely overtake you. Indeed, if he is pleased to give you faith in the name of Jesus, and a sincere repentance of your crimes, there is yet hope; for "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin;"* otherwise I testify to you, from his Word, you shall surely perish. He who said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery,"† will not hold you guiltless in the day of his wrath. But the apostle joins *whoredom* with adultery, and has expressly inserted *fornication* in the black list of those sins which will certainly exclude from a place in the kingdom of God.‡ If you have been guilty, may the Lord fix a sense of your sin upon your conscience while you are reading, that you may not think it a light matter, but may instantly humble yourselves before him, and flee to the refuge provided for helpless sinners in the Gospel!§ If, by his restraining grace and providence, you have been hitherto preserved from this iniquity, you have reason to praise him. And O! pray to him (I speak more especially to young persons) that you may be enabled to "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."‖ It is your duty and interest to flee from this hateful evil, and to watch against the temptations which lead to it, as you would avoid a pestilence. By complying with it, you hazard all your peace and comfort in this life, as well as sin against the great God. If a criminal intercourse between single persons does not issue in marriage, a long train of mischiefs is the usual consequence; shame, remorse, misery, and very often total ruin, especially on the woman's part. And even if the parties are afterwards married, though the frequency of such cases may lessen the scandal in the sight of men, the sin committed against God remains the same. And an occasion is opened for such reflections and suspicions, as frequently embitter the peace and destroy the confidence and affection in which they might otherwise have lived.

V. I observe, likewise, with concern, a spirit of open impiety and infidelity spreading amongst some persons. They are bold to "proclaim their sin as *Sodom*:"¶ they cannot be content with the practice of wickedness, or with tempting others to partake of their evil deeds, but they are prompted to scoff at the truths of the Gospel, and to ridicule and revile those who will not "run with them into the same excess of riot."** If any one, of this unhappy turn, should read this paper, I would take the opportunity to tell you, that I pity you, and pray for you. I well know the gall and wormwood†† of your state, for it was once my own. I cannot be surprised at any thing you say or do. You sin against the light,

* 1 John, i. 7. † Exod. xx. 14. ‡ 1 Cor. vi. 9. Gal. v. 19. § Heb. vi. 18.
‖ 1 Pet. ii. 11. ¶ Isa. iii. 9. ** 1 Pet. iv. 4. †† Lam. iii. 19.

and this makes you desperate. "It is hard to kick against the pricks."* I can tell, from my own past experience, that your heart and your language do not always agree. You are sometimes constrained to reverence the people you affect to despise; and often, when you boast of jollity and pleasure, you feel something within that makes you wish you could change conditions with a sheep or a dog. I doubt not but you understand what I mean. Why, then, should you remain in this miserable bondage, when there is One able to set you free? Perhaps you have concluded that you have gone too far to stop; that you have sinned with too high a hand to be forgiven. A secret despair of this kind is Satan's great engine, by which he hurries many sinners to the most dreadful extravagancies. But may I not allege my own case for your encouragement against such a conclusion? You have probably heard that I was once "a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious."† I was so indeed, to a degree I cannot express. But I obtained mercy. The exceeding abundant grace of our Lord Jesus Christ brought me out of that dreadful state, and in his providence he has placed me amongst you, that if I only pass you in the street, you may have a proof before your eyes of his gracious declaration, that "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men for the Son of man's sake. There is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared."‡ Oh that I could prevail with you to seek him while he is to be found, to submit to him before the gate of mercy is quite shut! then "I am sure iniquity should not be your ruin:"§ for "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him."‖ At least let me give you one caution: do not make the Scripture, or the people who love it, the subjects of your wanton mirth. "Be not a mocker, lest your bands be made strong."¶ A common proverb says, "It is ill jesting with edged tools." I am sure it may be applied in the present case. If the cause you despise is the cause of God, it will be a dreadful thing to be found fighting against him.

VI. There remains a considerable number to whom I have not yet spoken, who may know they are not believers, yet are tolerably regular in their attendance upon the means of grace, and are not habitually guilty of gross and open sins. I commend you for your readiness to hear the Gospel, and rejoice that it has some influence upon your conduct. But I would caution you against resting in outward privileges, or thinking yourself safe because you have escaped the abominations in which you see some others live. There are other sins which, though not so heinous in the judgment of man, are sufficient to ruin the soul. If you "love the

* Acts, ix. 5. † 1 Tim. i. 13—16. ‡ Matt. xii. 31. Psalm cxxx. 4.
§ Ezek. xviii. 30. ‖ Heb. vii. 25. ¶ Isa. xxviii. 22.

world, the love of the Father is not in you.* To be carnally minded is death.† Covetousness is idolatry.‡ If you are under the prevailing power of passion, pride, and resentment, you are strangers to the grace of God."§ In a word, "If you have not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of his.‖ A form of Godliness without the power,¶ will leave you helpless and hopeless. Can you be content to be no more than chaff amongst the wheat,** to converse and worship with the people of God for a season here, and then to be separated from them for ever? If you should see those whom you know and love, your friends and relatives, received into the kingdom at last, and you yourselves shut out,†† how awful will your disappointment be! May the Lord awaken you to a diligent search into your own hearts, and into his Holy Word, and not suffer you to take up with any thing short of a real and saving change! "Look to Jesus, the author and finisher of faith:"‡‡ who is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and pardon, life and immortality:"§§ and remember you have his faithful promise, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.‖‖‖

I can truly say, my dear friends, that "my heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved."¶¶ As some, I fear, have hitherto heard in vain, and some will not hear me at all, I have chosen this method to address you all; I hope none will be offended, for I would not willingly offend a child. I hope I can appeal to yourselves, that God has given me a desire to live peaceably with all men, and to the utmost of my power, to promote your welfare. "I seek not yours, but you."*** In a little time "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ."††† There I must give give an account of my ministry, and you must account for the privileges with which you have been favoured. When I think of the solemnities of that day, and the worth of your immortal souls, I am at loss for words suitable to my desires on your behalf. "I beseech you by the tender mercies of our God,"‡‡‡ "I warn you by his approaching terrors,§§§ that you receive not this grace of God in a preached Gospel in vain.‖‖‖ And though I cannot expect to prevail on you all, yet I write in hope, that a blessing from the Lord will make the reading of this paper useful to some. And if it be so, even to one person, I ought to esteem it an over-payment for the labour of my whole life.

* 1 John, ii. 15. † Rom. viii. 6. ‡ Col. iii. 5. § Gal. v. 20.
‖ Rom. vii. 9. ¶ 2 Tim. iii. 5. ** Matt. iii. 12. †† Luke, xiii. 25—30.
‡‡ Heb. xii. 2. §§ Acts, v. 31. ‖‖ John, vi. 37. ¶¶ Rom. x. 1.
*** 2 Cor. xii. 14. ††† 2 Cor. iii. 10. ‡‡‡ Rom. xii. 1. §§§ 2 Cor. v. 11.
‖‖‖ 2 Cor. vi. 1.

And now I commend you to God, to the word of his grace, and to the teaching of his Spirit.* I make it my earnest request to the favoured few who know the Lord, and have received the spirit of prayer, that in your supplications at the throne of grace, you will frequently bear in remembrance,

Your affectionate Friend and Servant
in the Gospel of Christ,
JOHN NEWTON.

* Acts, xx. 32.

A TOKEN

OF

Affection and Respect,

TO THE PARISHIONERS OF

ST. MARY WOOLNOTH AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH,

LONDON.

From their Minister.

Acts, xxvi. 3.

I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

A TOKEN

OF

AFFECTION AND RESPECT.

I BESEECH THEE TO HEAR ME PATIENTLY.

My respected Friends,

It being impracticable to *write* separately and distinctly to every person in the parishes with which I am connected as a Minister; I cannot offer you this testimony of my sincere regard for your welfare, without availing myself of the conveniency of the press.* And I wish, while I express myself with freedom, to observe the same respect and tenderness, as if I had an opportunity of conversing personally and severally with each of you.

My income from the parishes is legally settled, and regularly and readily paid. I am well satisfied with it; and have only to wish, on this head, that the people of my charge may be benefitted by the ministry which they jointly contribute to support. I acknowledge, likewise, with thankfulness to God and to you, that in the occasional intercourse I have had amongst you, I have never received the least personal incivility or unkindness from any one. Though I cannot but know and lament, that the subject-matter of my preaching is to many of you not pleasing; and though several steps I have thought it my duty to take, must appear, to some of you, unnecessary and troublesome innovations, I have met with no direct and studied marks of opposition or ill-will. Your conduct has, in this respect, been worthy of the politeness and humanity which distinguish you on other occasions.

The only cause of complaint, or rather of grief, which you have given me is, that so many of those, to whom I earnestly desire to be useful, refuse me the pleasure of seeing them at church on the Lord's day. My concern does not arise from the want of hearers. If either a numerous auditory, or the respectable characters of

* A passage is omitted here, expressive of the author's determination to confine this address to his parishioners; but as his executors consider this as applicable only to the period of its publication, they have not scrupled to insert the address among his posthumous writings.

many of the individuals who compose it, could satisfy me, I might be satisfied. But I must grieve while I see so few of my own parishioners among them. Let me entreat your favourable attention, while I respectfully and affectionately expostulate on this head.

The general design of my ministry in this city might, and I trust would, have been answered, if it had pleased God to place me in some other parish. But He saw fit to fix me amongst you. This appointment, as it ought to give you a preference in my regard, and to make me studiously solicitous to promote your advantage; so, likewise, it gives you a more immediate and particular interest than others, in the event of my services. However little worthy of your notice in any other view, if I am a servant of God, a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, if I speak the truth in love, how can I but be pained at the thought, that many to whom the word of salvation is sent* refuse to hear it, and reject the counsel of God against themselves!†

I am unwilling to suppose, and yet, when I consider the progress of infidelity in the present day, I cannot but fear that there may be some amongst you, who absent themselves from the church, not so much from a dislike of what may be called my scheme, or my sentiments, as from a disregard to religion in general, at least to the Christian religion. I know how to pity persons of this unhappy turn, for it was too long my own. It is not only a hazardous, but an uncomfortable state; for, notwithstanding their utmost address and endeavours, they cannot wholly avoid painful apprehensions lest the Bible, which they wish to be false, should prove to be the truth. It was thus with me, and it must, in the nature of things, be thus with every infidel. To doubt or deny the truth of Christianity is too common; but to demonstrate that it is false, is an utter impossibility. I laboured long in the attempt, but when I least expected it, I met with evidence that overpowered my resistance; and the Bible which I had despised, removed my scepticism. He against whom I had hardened myself, was pleased to spare me; and I now live to‡ tell you, that there is forgiveness with him.

But the greater part of you, I am persuaded, will agree with me thus far at least, that the Scripture is a divine revelation. But do not some of you act inconsistently with your acknowledged principles? Can you reconcile your conduct to the precepts of God, or to the character of those who fear and love him, as described either in the Old or New Testament? If you have servants and dependants, you expect to be obeyed; and do you profess yourselves the ser-

* Acts, xiii. 26. † Luke, vii. 30. ‡ Psalm cxxx. 4.

vants of God, and yet allow yourselves in the breach of his known commandments? The habits of business or amusement in which you live, not only engross your time and thoughts during the rest of the week, but indispose you for the due observation of the day which he has enjoined you to keep holy. You have engagements of another kind, which will not admit of your stated regular attendance on the public worship of God; and if you constrain yourself to be present occasionally, the light which a faithful preacher forces upon your conscience offends you, and makes you willing to catch at every pretence which may furnish you with the shadow of an excuse for not hearing him again.

But this is not the character of all who have withdrawn themselves. Some of you have not forsaken the public worship; you attend at other churches, and are ready to complain that you have been driven from your own. If you have candour to allow that possibly I mean well, yet the manner of my preaching is so different from what you were formerly accustomed to, and from what you approve, that after having heard me, and perhaps more than once, you have been constrained to seek new places, and to resign your seats in your parish church to strangers. If I venture to plead with you upon this ground, it is not without being aware of the delicacy of the subject. It will seem like pleading my own cause. But I am conscious that I would not trouble you with a single line in the way of self-justification, if it were not for your sakes, and with a desire of obviating such misapprehensions as I verily believe you cannot retain without disadvantage to yourselves.

As a protestant minister, and preaching to protestant hearers, I not only take my text from the Scriptures, but likewise draw from thence the proofs and illustrations of what I advance in my sermons. I frequently, yea constantly appeal to the Bible, the acknowledged standard and touchstone of religious sentiments. As a minister of the church of England, when speaking to the professed members of that church, I might likewise appeal to the current doctrine expressed in our liturgy and articles; but I seldom do it, because having, as I conceive, the highest authority, the holy Scripture, on my side, I need no other. If you could be certain that, with respect to the points wherein we differ, the Scriptures are for you and against me, your refusal to hear me would be justifiable. But otherwise it behooves you to be cautious, lest, while you think you only reject what appears to you novel or impertinent, your contempt should unhappily fall upon the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, and of Christ himself. I must magnify my office.* On other occasions, I wish to demean my-

*Rom. xi. 13.

self as the least of all, and the servant of all; but when I stand in the pulpit, I speak in the name and under the authority of Him, whom we believe will shortly come to be our Judge, and who has said, "He that despiseth you, despiseth me."*

I mean not to take up your time, at present, with a detail or discussion of sentiments. I offered a brief outline of my thoughts and aims, in the first sermon I preached among you, and which was printed solely with the design of presenting it to you; though by a mistake, that gave me pain at the time, it became more public than I intended. To the profession I then made, I have, by the goodness of God, been enabled invariably to conform. I doubt not but I have spoken the truth;† I have endeavoured to speak it in love. It is true, I have not dared to disguise or palliate my principles. I account it a great mercy to me that I have not been influenced by the fear or the favour of men. But my conscience bears me witness, that so far as truth and duty would admit, I have studied to avoid whatever might give you offence or pain. When I came to St. Mary Woolnoth, not being altogether a stranger to what is called the world, and to the maxims prevalent in genteel life, I could not promise myself very genteel acceptance as a preacher. I knew that if I would be faithful to my conscience, some of my hearers must be displeased; but though I was constrained to risk your displeasure, I have been solicitous not to provoke it, or to lay any unnecessary difficulties either in your way or in my own.

Many persons, whose good sense and liberal education exempt or free them from prejudices of other kinds, are frequently almost as much under the power of *religious* prejudices as the vulgar. We lament this more than we wonder at it. The reason is obvious. In temporal concerns they examine and judge for themselves. But in religious matters they are content to let others judge for them, and (if I may so speak) to swim with the stream of a prevailing opinion. To this cause I must ascribe some of the exceptions that are taken to my ministry.

In almost every age and country where Christianity has been professed, some hard name or term of reproach has been imposed upon those who ventured to maintain a more evangelical strain of doctrine, or a stricter course of conduct, than was agreeable to the spirit of the times in which they lived. Even the *Christian* name, honourable as we may now think it, was used by the heathens, when it first obtained, as a stigma, a term of the utmost contempt and hatred; and Christians were, by common consent, reputed the off-scouring and filth of all things.‡ In a like re-

* Luke, x. 16. † Eph. iv. 15. ‡ 1 Cor. iv. 13.

proachful sense the names of Lollards and Gospellers were applied by the papists, to those whom God honoured as his instruments in freeing our forefathers from the shakles of popery, by introducing that light of truth, which issued in the reformation. Men of the same spirit were afterwards branded in protestant nations with the terms Pietist and Puritan. Of late years the name of Methodist has been imposed as a mark and vehicle of reproach. I have not hitherto met with a person who could give me a definition or precise idea of what is generally intended by this formidable word, by those who use it to express their disapprobation. Till I do, I am at a loss whether to confess or deny that I am (what some account me) a methodist. If it be supposed to include any thing, whether in principle or conduct, unsuitable to the character of a regular minister of the church of England, I may, and I do disown it. And yet it is probable, that some of my parishioners hearing, and easily taking it for granted, that I am a Methodist, think it a sufficient proof that it cannot be worth their while to hear me.

That I may not disgust and weary my hearers by the length of my sermons, I carefully endeavour not to exceed three quarters of an hour, at those seasons when I have most reason to hope for the presence of my parishioners. At other times I allow myself a longer term; but even this, I understand, is thought too long. If I considered my preaching only as a customary appendage, without which I could not, with a good grace, collect my dues, we should not long differ upon this point. So far as brevity would be pleasing, it would cost me little trouble to please. But if the proper ends of preaching are to instruct, to admonish, to exhort, and to persuade; if the great truths of Scripture are to be explained, illustrated and applied; if the various known or probable states and cases of the several persons who compose our auditories are to be attended to; in a word, if, as a preacher, I am conscientiously to endeavour to save myself, and them* that hear me; then I confess I know not how to answer these ends, were I to limit myself to a much shorter space than I do. And sometimes when my heart has been deeply impressed with a sense of the worth of souls, the brevity and uncertainty of life, and the solemnity of that hour when both preachers and hearers must give an account of themselves to God, I have, perhaps, in defiance of my previous determination, been constrained to exceed it a few minutes, though but seldom. I am persuaded you are mistaken, when you think the length of my discourses is the cause of your dissatisfaction. It is not so much the length, as the subject-mat-

* 1 Tim. iv. 16.

ter, that wearies you. It is possible I could, if I durst, preach a sermon, which though it exceed three quarters of an hour, you would not think too long. Many persons can afford their attention for several hours to pleaders at the bar, or to speakers in parliament, without weariness, whose patience is quickly exhausted under a sermon, where the principles of Scripture are plainly enforced, and a faithful application of them is addressed to the conscience. I mean not to vie with the public speakers you admire. I lay no claim to the honor of an orator, nor do I expect, or even wish, to engage your attention by the elegance and modulation of my periods. If I possessed abilities of this kind, I must decline the use of them. I must speak to the unlearned as well as to the wise, and therefore my principal aim is to be understood. Yet I would hope I am not justly chargeable with speaking nonsense, or expressing myself with a levity or carelessness unsuitable to the pulpit, or disrespectful to the auditory. But, alas! there are too many hearers who seem more desirous of entertainment, than of real benefit from a sermon! They do not act thus in the affairs of common life. Were they to consult a physician or a lawyer, they would not be content with having their opinion upon a point of law, or a case of medicine, in which they themselves had no personal concern. It is their *own* case they expect should be considered. But when they come to church, if the discourse be ingenious, and the elocution of the preacher agreeable, it suffices; and the less the subject comes home to their personal concernment, the more (in general) they are pleased with it. That is, they are disposed to be pleased with the preacher, if he says nothing to make them displeased with themselves.

Another objection which I must likewise treat as a prejudice is, that I am an extempore preacher. The practice of reading sermons to a public assembly, has been hitherto peculiar to the English nation. Bishop Burnet observes, that it took its rise soon after the dawn of the reformation amongst us. Latimer and other great men, whose names, now they are dead, are mentioned with some respect, were, when living, treated by many as if they had been Methodists. They were contemptuously styled Gospellers, and preaching in unquiet times, when there were insurrections in different parts of the kingdom, they were traduced as our Saviour and his apostles had been before them, and charged with having a design to foment sedition by their sermons. This was done with a view of awakening the suspicion and distrust of Henry VIII. against them, who was a prince sufficiently jealous of his authority. The preachers not only disavowed the charge, but were led to write their discourses, that they might, if necessary, confute their slanderers, by producing what they had actually

delivered. The like accusations and the like suspicions, in some succeeding reigns, rendered the same precaution expedient. At length the custom became general and established. In most, if not in all other parts of Christendom, a man who should attempt to read his sermon from the pulpit, would find but few hearers; he would be judged disqualified for the office of a preacher by his own confession. Insomuch that they who, after having previously considered their subject, are not able to speak upon it with some degree of readiness, are obliged not only to write their sermons, but to submit to the burdensome task of committing them to memory; for reading them would not be endured. With us, on the contrary, the prejudice in favour of reading is so strong, that many people can form no expectation of sense, argument, or coherence, from a man who preaches without a book. They will require little more proof of his being unworthy of their notice, than to be told he is an extempore speaker. Here again, in the concerns of common life, they judge and act otherwise. There is little doubt but the theatres would soon be much less frequented, if the performers were to appear with books in their hands, and each one to read his respective part. And perhaps the theatre is the only place where a public speaker would be much admired, if it were known that he spoke neither more nor less than he had previously determined to say. In parliamentary debates, and in pleadings in our courts of justice, the occurrence of unexpected replies and objections, and other new circumstances, renders it necessary that a man should be so far master of his subject and his thoughts, as to be able to accommodate himself to those sudden turns, which often lead him into a train of discussions and arguments, which could not be premeditated because the occasions could not be foreseen. If this habit and facility of speaking off-hand, and applying principles of general knowledge to particular subjects and incidents, as they offer, be allowed, approved, and even required in other public speakers, why should it be supposed that the preacher is the only person who cannot, or must not, express his thoughts, but in that order, and in those words, in which he has previously written them? Is not Divinity a subject sufficiently copious? Are not the topics which the Scriptures afford, well suited by their importance, certainty, and authority, to awaken the strongest emotions, and to draw forth the highest exertions of which the human mind is capable? Shall the management of the contested claim of a house or a field, or the interests of contending political parties, be deemed of such consequence as to engage the attention and admiration of hearers? And shall a minister of the Gospel, when called by his office to unfold the wonders of redemption, or to enlarge on the solemn

themes of judgment, heaven, and hell, be thought the only man who has chosen a subject incapable of justifying his earnestness, or of furnishing him with such thoughts and expressions upon the spot, as the most judicious part of his auditory need not disdain to hear? Certainly, if the Bible be true, a minister must have the advantage of all other persons who speak in a public character! His subject is more weighty, and of infinitely more concern to his hearers. He speaks in the name of God, and has an express promise of the assistance of his Holy Spirit, if not to supersede his faculties, yet to influence, animate, and guide them, to bring things seasonably to his remembrance, and to apply them to the heart with a divine energy. We know that it is so in fact; and though we are slighted, and perhaps despised, by many, there are others who receive our testimony with joy, and will acknowledge, that what the world esteems the foolishness of preaching,* has, by the blessing of God, made them wise unto salvation.†

I earnestly entreat you, my beloved friends, seriously to consider these things. In the midst of the various sentiments and opinions which prevail, it is at least certain that we are all mortal, and that life is not only short, but highly precarious. If you believe the Scriptures, you acknowledge, that after death there is an appointed judgment, and an unchangeable, everlasting state. If so, should you not carefully examine the ground of your hope, and fear even the possibility of a mistake, which, if not rectified before death, will then be fatal, and without remedy? If you would not sign a lease or a contract without examining it for yourselves, why will you venture your eternal concernments implicitly upon the prevailing opinions of those around you? Especially, when our Lord himself has told us, that whoever may be right, the *many* are undoubtedly wrong. For "wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and *many* there be that go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and *few* there be that find it."‡ If, for, the present, you seem confirmed in your manner of thinking and living, by the numbers, names, and examples of those with whom you agree; yet consider, you must soon be separated from them all. Not one of them will be able to comfort you in a dying hour, or to answer for you to God. You may live in a throng, but you must die alone. Religious subjects are seldom the chosen topics of conversation, in what is usually called good company; if occasionally introduced, how superficially are they treated, yet how peremptorily are they decided upon, and then

* 1 Cor. i. 21. † 2 Tim. iii. 15. ‡ Matthew, vii. 13.

how readily dismissed! But sooner or later their importance will be known. The Scripture is the rule by which we must all be judged at last; it is therefore our wisdom to judge ourselves by it now. Would you be persuaded to do this, praying to God for that assistance which you need to direct your inquiries, and which he has promised he will afford to them that ask him, it would have a happy effect upon your principles and your peace. Search and read for yourselves, if the Scripture does not speak to all* mankind as in a state of condemnation; if it affords us any hope of deliverance but for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ†; if it intimates any method of being saved through him, but by faith‡ wrought by the operation of God, and evinced by a temper of love, and a habit of cheerful obedience to his precepts §; if these points, which comprise the general scope of my preaching, are contained and taught in the Bible, they ought not to be spoken against.

I can have no interest to forward by this address, except that interest which I feel in your welfare. I have no favour to solicit from you, but that you would attend to the things which pertain to your eternal happiness. I can truly say, I seek not yours, but you.‖ Though I am not indifferent to your good opinion, so far as respects my integrity and moral character, yet it is a small thing with me to be judged of man's judgment; nor would your united approbation content me, except I could hope it was founded in your cordial acceptance of the Gospel which I preach. I have taken this method, as it seemed the only one in my power, of acquainting some of you with my sentiments, which yet it highly concerns you to know; not because they are mine, but, (I speak it with confidence,) because they are true, and of the utmost consequence. However amiable and benevolent in your private characters, except you are born again,¶ born from above, delivered from the love and spirit of the world**, and made partakers of the love and spirit of the Lord Jesus,†† you cannot be accepted of him in the great approaching day of his appearance. My heart longs for your salvation; but whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, I must take your consciences to witness, that I have been faithful to you. If after this, (which may God forbid!) any should perish, I am clear of their blood.‡‡ Permit me to make one request. It is not likely that I shall ever trouble you in this way again, and therefore I would entreat you to preserve this paper. If it makes no impression on you at present, a more

* Rom. iii. 19. † Acts, iv. 12. ‡ Mark, xvi. 16. § Col. ii. 12. Gal. v. 6. 1 Pet. i. 2. ‖ 2 Cor. xii. 14. ¶ John iii. 3. ** Gal. i. 4. †† Rom. viii. 9. ‡‡ Acts, xx. 26.

favourable season may come. If you pay but little attention to it in your prosperity, a time of affliction may invite you to peruse it again. If you regard it not while I am living, you may, should you survive me, read it more carefully after my decease. It is however, probable that some of you will not survive me. Death may be even at your door. If the thought of such a visitant be unwelcome to you, it is owing to a secret consciousness that you are not prepared for it, and therefore you seek refuge from the painful apprehension, in a round of business or pleasure; perhaps, for the present with too much success. Yet, sooner or later, the hour you dread must come. "It is appointed for all men once to die, and after death the judgment." There we shall all meet. May the Lord God so influence your minds now, that our meeting then may be comfortable and happy!

Thus far I have written chiefly to those who absent themselves from the church. But I thank God I am not wholly deserted by my parishioners. With regard to those who have patience and candour to hear me, I have a hope that what may now seem harsh and difficult in my sermons, may hereafter approve itself to their judgment. No person in the congregation can be more averse from the doctrines which I now preach than I myself once was. This gives me encouragement for others, especially when they are willing to attend on the means which God has promised to bless. For faith cometh by hearing.* If I at any time, contrary to my intention, uttered a single sentence in my own spirit, or that might give them *just* cause of offence, I should be glad, if I knew it, to ask their pardon.

Some of you there are, (may God increase the number,) who not only hear, but approve, because they have an experience in their own hearts that I speak the truth. They have felt the evil of sin, and the necessity of a Saviour. They have received the record God has given of his Son, and place their whole dependence upon him, as their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.† To these I can address myself with more freedom. You know the difficulties of my situation, and will assist me with your prayers. I trust, likewise, you will assist me by your conduct, and that your lives and conversations will contribute to stop the mouths of gainsayers, and constrain them to acknowledge that the doctrines of grace which I preach, when rightly understood and cordially embraced, are productive of peace, contentment, integrity, benevolence, and humility. Many eyes are upon you, watching for your halting, and seeking occasion by your miscarriages, if they can observe any, to speak evil of the way of

* Rom. x. 17. † 1 Cor. i. 30.

truth.* May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ enable you to disappoint them, and make them ashamed! We must expect some opposition, many temptations and trials; but we are engaged in a good cause, and we have a mighty Saviour, a compassionate friend, a prevailing advocate. He knows your path; he sees your conflicts. And he has engaged to support, to guide, and to guard you, and at length to make you more than conquerors,† and to bestow upon you a crown of everlasting life.‡

I am your affectionate servant,

JOHN NEWTON.

Hoxton, Nov. 1, 1781.

* 2 Pet. ii. 2. † Rom. viii. 37. ‡ Rev. ii. 10.

A LETTER

ON

Political Debate.

PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1793.

TO

THE REV. D**** W********.

DEAR AND REVEREND SIR,

THE kind present of your book, and your kind intention in addressing your sermons to me by name, deserved a more early acknowledgment. I am pleased with every mark of regard from a Christian brother, though I *could* have wished not to be held up to public notice: and Mr. J———t, who likewise meant well, has made the business a little more awkward to me by styling me *Doctor*, an honour which the newspapers informed me (for I have no official intelligence) has been conferred upon me by the college of Prince-town, in America. However, by the grace of God, I am determined not to assume the title of Doctor, unless I should receive a diploma from a college in the New Settlement at Sierra Leone. The dreary coast of Africa was the university to which the Lord was pleased to send me, and I dare not acknowledge a relation to any other.

I need not express my approbation of your sermons in stronger terms than by saying, that I have seldom met with any thing more congenial to my own sentiments and taste. I read them with great satisfaction.

Though I have very little time for reading, had your whole volume consisted of such sermons, I should have gone through it much sooner: but your lectures on Liberty, though ingenious and well written, were not so interesting to me. It was, therefore, longer before I could find leisure to finish them; and this has occasioned the delay of my letter; for I thought it would be premature to write till I could say I had read them.

I hope I am a friend to liberty, both civil and religious, but I fear you will hardly allow it, when I say, I think myself possessed of as much of these blessings at present as I wish for. I can, indeed, form an idea of something more perfect; but I expect no perfection in this state: and when I consider the Lord's question, "Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" I cannot but wonder that such a nation as this should still be favoured with so many privileges, which we still enjoy and still abuse.

Allow me to say, that it excites both my wonder and concern that a minister, possessed of the great and important views expressed in your two sermons, should think it worth his while to appear in the line of a political writer, or expect to amend our con-

stitution or situation, by proposals of a political reform. When I look around upon the present state of the nation, such an attempt appears to me no less vain and unseasonable, than it would be to paint a cabin while the ship is sinking, or a parlour when the house is already on fire. My dear Sir, my prayer to God for you is, that he may induce you to employ the talents he has given you, in pointing out *sin* as the great cause and source of every existing evil, and to engage those who love and fear him, instead of losing time in political speculation, for which very few of them are tolerably competent, to sigh and cry for our abounding abominations; and to stand in the breach, by prayer, that, if it may be, wrath may yet be averted, and our national mercies prolonged. This, I think, is the true patriotism, the best, if not the only way, in which persons in private life can serve their country. For the rest, there will be always dead to bury the dead. The instruments whom the Lord employs in political matters are usually such as are incapable of better employment. All things and persons serve him; but there are services under the direction of his providence which are not good enough for his own children. *They* belong to a kingdom which is not of this world; they are strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and a part of their scriptural character is, that they are the "quiet in the land."

The reasoning for a more equal representation in parliament is specious; but, while infidelity and profligacy abound among rich and poor; while there is such a general want of principle and public spirit among all ranks; I apprehend that, whatever changes might take place in this business, no real benefit will follow. The consequence would rather be the introduction of perjury, bribery, drunkenness, and riot, into towns which have hitherto been more exempted from them than the boroughs. As the numbers of buyers increased, so would the number of those who are willing to be sold. And I know that many judicious people in Birmingham and Manchester are so sensible of this, that they would be sorry to have elections among them, though there are exceptions. I have so poor an opinion of the *bulk* both of the electors and the elected, that, I think, if the seats in the house of commons could be determined by a lottery, abundance of mischief and wickedness might be prevented, and perhaps the nation might be represented to as much advantage by this as by any other method; but these are not my concerns.

The position, that, if the body of a people are aggrieved, they have a right to redress themselves, must be much limited and modified before I can reconcile it to Scripture. I am not fond of despots; but I think, if ever there was one upon earth, Nebuchadnezzar was a despot. Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; whom he would he set up, and whom he

would he put down; Dan. v. 18, 19. Yet Jeremiah declares, that the Lord had given him this despotic power, and had commanded all the nations to serve him. Surely, if you and I had been there, (knowing what we know now,) we should not have disputed this command, nor have excited the people, however oppressed, to shake off the yoke which God himself had put upon them: and if, for our sins, the Lord should put us under the power of the Russians, I should rather look to him than to man for deliverance.

I think a heathen said, "The day which deprives a man of his liberty, robs him of half his virtues." If I was a heathen I should say so too. But the Gospel teaches me otherwise. The apostle expected that believing servants, who at that time, I suppose, were chiefly bond servants or slaves, would act from nobler principles, and aim at a more sublime end, than the conception of philosophers had ever reached to. That they would act from a regard to the glory of God our Saviour, and to the honour of his Gospel; Tit. ii. 10; 1 Tim. vi. 1.; and elsewhere he says, 1 Cor. vii. 21. "Art thou called, being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather." If divine Providence offers you a manumission, accept it with thankfulness; if not, it is but a trifle to you, who are already the Lord's freedman; and, in your most servile employments, if submitted to for his sake, you are accepted of him no less than if you were placed in the most honourable and important stations. The Christian, however situated, must be free indeed, for the Son of God has made him so. On the other hand, you and I, dear sir, know how much they are to be pitied who are frantic for what they call liberty, and consider not that they are in the most deplorable bondage, the slaves of sin and Satan, and subject to the curse of the law and the wrath of God. Oh! for a voice to reach their hearts, that they may know themselves, and seek deliverance from their dreadful thraldom. Satan has many contrivances to amuse them, and to turn their thoughts from their real danger; and none seem more ensnaring, in the present day, than to engage them in the cry, "Great is the Diana Liberty!" May you and I labour with success to direct them to the one thing which is absolutely needful, and abundantly sufficient. The Socinians are rather the most forward in this cry; which I fear will have a baneful influence upon the power of religion among the more evangelical dissenters. An agreement in political sentiments produces much cordiality and intercourse between those who, in point of doctrine, have stood at the greatest distance. And already, in some pulpits, (proh dolor!) a description of the rights of man occupies much of the time which used to be employed in proclaiming the glory and grace of the Saviour, and the rights of God to the love and obedience of his creatures.

As to the revolution in France, I suppose no humane person was sorry when the Bastile was destroyed, and the pillars of their oppressive government shaken. The French had then a great opportunity put into their hands. I pretend not to judge of the political merit of their constitution: but, if I approved it in other respects, I durst not praise it so strongly as you do, while I knew it was planted in atheism, and has been watered with deluges of human blood; while I knew it began in insult to Christianity, and aimed at its abolition.

However, their first admired constitution is now at an end, and has no more force than the repeated oaths by which they bound themselves to maintain it. And now, not content with pleasing themselves, they are aiming to force their schemes upon the surrounding nations. I should call this Quixotism in the extreme, if I did not consider them as saws and hammers in the hand of the Lord. So far as they are his instruments they will succeed, but not an inch further. Their wrath shall praise him, to the full extent of its acting, and be subservient to his designs; the remainder of it he will restrain. And, when he maketh inquisition for the blood they have wantonly shed, and for their defiance of his great name, neither their phantom liberty, nor their idol Voltaire, will screen them from his notice.

I am sorry for your severe censures on the present administration. For, when I compare the state of the nation in the year 1783, or at the time of the king's illness, with what it is now, I cannot but think that the providence of God raised up Mr. Pitt for the good of these kingdoms, and that no man could do what he has done, unless a blessing from on high had been upon his counsels and measures. I speak simply; having nothing to hope, or, as I think, to fear from men in power, I am not concerned to vindicate the conduct of ministry in the lump; but I believe, though it be easy to draw up theories and schemes in the closet, which may look very pretty and plausible upon paper, difficulties will occur in the administration of a great people, which can scarcely be conceived of by persons in private life. And, with respect to Britain at present, I believe, if the prophet Daniel was at the head of our affairs, or if all our ministers were angels, the corruption and venality of the times would labour hard to counteract their designs.

There is no new thing under the sun. When I read Salust's account of the Jugurthine war, I seem to read (mutatis mutandis) our own history. The wealth and luxury which followed the successes of Lucullus in Asia, soon destroyed all appearance of public spirit in Rome. Our acquisitions in the East have had a similar effect. I know some persons who, after giving full proof of their incompetency to manage their own private affairs; after hav-

ing ruined their families by dissipation, and stained their characters by fraud and bankruptcy, have presently set up for national reformers. I am very sorry they should seem to have the sanction of such a name as yours.

I know not even the names of the gentlemen who compose the society of "the friends of the people," and consequently have no prejudice against their characters. But you yourself are sorry, and seem surprised that they should adopt an eulogium upon Mr. Paine. I am sorry likewise, but I am not surprised. Ex pede Herculem! I rely more upon this feature than on all their declarations. When you say that, allowing them to be men of penetration, nothing more is necessary to establish the purity of their intentions, it sounds very strange to me, when I consider it as the sentiment of the author of the two sermons which I have read with so much pleasure. Surely it cannot accord with your knowledge of human nature!

When our Lord was upon earth, he refused to be a judge or a divider. And he said, afterwards, "My kingdom is not of this world: if it were, then would my servants fight." I should think, as Peter thought, that if any thing could have justified resistance in a disciple, that was the time when Jesus was apprehended by wicked men, to be condemned and crucified; but his master rebuked his zeal. I think that, as Christians, we have nothing to expect from *this* world but tribulation—no peace but in him. If our lot be so cast that we can exercise our ministry free from stripes, fines, imprisonment, and death, it is more than the Gospel has promised us. If Christians were quiet when under the government of Nero and Caligula, and when persecuted and hunted like wild beasts, they ought to be not only quiet, but very thankful now. It was then accounted an honour to suffer for Christ. Of late, the rights of man are pleaded as a protection from the offence of the cross.

Had I been in France some time ago, and if by going between the contending parties I could have reconciled them, I certainly ought to have done it. But to take a part in their disputes myself, and to become openly and warmly a Jacobin or a Feuillant, would be ridiculous in me, if all my connexions and interests were in England, and I expected in a few weeks to leave France for ever. In this view I consider myself now. If I had wisdom or influence to sooth the angry passions of mankind, whether whigs or tories, I would gladly employ them; but, as to myself, I am neither whig nor tory, but a friend to both. I am a stranger, and a pilgrim. My Πολιτευμα, my charter, my rights, my treasures are, I hope, in heaven, and there my heart ought to be. In less than a few weeks I may be removed (and perhaps suddenly) into the unseen world, where all that causes so much bustle upon earth at

present, will be no more to me than the events which took place among the antediluvians. How much then does it import me, to be found watching, with my loins girded up, and my lamp burning, diligently engaged in my proper calling! For the Lord has not called me to set nations to right, but to preach the Gospel, to proclaim the glory of his name, and to endeavour to win souls. Happy is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing! In the hour, when death shall open the door into eternity, many things which now assume an air of importance, will be found light and unsubstantial as the baseless fabric of a vision.

I know not whether the length and freedom of my letter may not require an apology, as much as my long silence. But, as I give you full credit for what you say of your candour towards those who differ from you in sentiment, I am the less apprehensive of offending you. From the perusal of your sermons, I have conceived a great respect and affection for you. Though we may not meet upon earth, I trust we shall meet where all are perfectly of one mind. In the mean time, I set you down in my heart as a friend and a brother. As I was forced to write, both duty and love obliged me to be faithful and free in giving you my thoughts.

I recommend you to the care and blessings of the Great Shepherd and Saviour, and remain, for his sake,

Reverend Sir,

Your affectionate friend and brother,

J. N.

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